NANCY McVEIGH of the MONK ROAD

R. HENRY MAINER

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"Tommy wus one o' the boys, an' a pal o' ours."

—p. 31.

Nancy McVeigh

OF THE MONK ROAD

BY

R. Henry Mainer

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William Briggs
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These few stories of a good old
woman I dedicate to the
memory of

A. R. S. M.

who sat beside me while I wrote
them and offered many happy suggestions.

"Her face, deep lined ; her eyes were gray,
Mirrors of her heart's continuous play ;
Her head, crowned with a wintry sheet,
Had learned naught of this world's deceit.
She oft forgot her own in others' trials,
And met the day's rebuffs with sweetest smiles."

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NANCY McVEIGH.

CHAPTER I.

THE WOMAN OF THE INN.

DURING the *régime* of Governor Monk, of Upper Canada, the military road was cut through the virgin pine from Lake Ontario to the waters leading into Georgian Bay. The clearings followed, then the homesteads, then the corners, where the country store and the smithy flourished in primitive dignity. The roadside hostelry soon had a place on the highway, and deep into its centre was Nancy McVeigh's.

Nancy McVeigh's tavern was famed near and far. In earliest days the name was painted in letters bold across the high gabled face, but years of weather had washed the paint off. Its owner, however, had so long and faithfully dominated its destiny that it was known only as her property, and so it was named. A hill sloped gently for half a mile, traversed by a roadway of dry, grey sand, flanked on either side by a split-rail snake fence,

gradually widening into an open space in front of the tavern. The tavern had reached an advanced stage of dilapidation. A rickety verandah in front shaded the first story, and a gable projected from above, so that the sill almost touched the ridge-board. A row of open sheds, facing inwards, ranged along one side of the yard, terminated by a barn, which originally had been a low log structure, but, with the increase of trade, had been capped with a board loft. Midway between the sheds and the house stood the pump, and whilst the owners gossiped over the brimming ale mugs within the house, the tired beasts dropped their muzzles into the trough. Some of the passers-by were of temperate habits, and did not enter the door leading to the bar, but accepted the refreshment offered by Nancy's pump, and thought none the less of the woman because their principles were out of sympathy with her business. The place lived only because of its mistress, and an odd character was she. Fate had directed her life into a peculiar channel, and she followed its course with a sureness of purpose that brought her admiration. She was tall, raw-boned, and muscled like a man. Her face was deeply lined, patient, and crowned with a mass of fine, fair hair turning into silvery grey, and blending so evenly that a casual observer could scarcely discern the change of color. It was her eyes, however, that betrayed the soul within, their harshness mocking the goodness which was known of her, and their softness at times giving

the lie to the roughness which, in a life such as hers, might be expected.

Nancy McVeigh, the tavern and the dusty Monk Road were synonymous, and to know one was to know all three.

Nancy was within the bar when two wayfarers, whose teams were drinking at the trough, entered.

"It's a foine day, Mistress McVeigh," greeted old Mr. Conors, at the sight of her.

"It is that, and more, too, Mr. Conors," she assented, including the two men before her in her remark.

"This spell o' weather's bad fer the crops. I'll have to stop at the pump altogether if it don't rain soon."

"You're welcome to your choice. If ye want a drink and can pay fer it, I am pleased to serve ye, but I ask no man fer what he cannot afford," was Nancy's rejoinder, as she wiped her hands on her apron after drawing the mugs.

"Been to town?" she inquired, after a minute's reflection.

"Yes, and a bad place it is to save money. The women folk have so many things to buy that I often wonder where the pay for the seed grain'll come from. Had to buy the missus a shawl, and two yards of flannel for the kids to-day, and heaven only knows what they will be wanting next week, when school begins again," commented Mr. Conors.

"'Tis a God's blessing to have your childer, the bright, wee things! They keep us from fergittin'

altogether," said Nancy, sighing, and looking abstractedly out of the window.

"She is thinkin', poor woman," observed Mr. O'Hagan, in a low tone.

"Ye have quite a squad yerself, Nancy," ventured Mr. Conors.

"Yes," she agreed, "there's Sam Duncan's little girl. You remember big Sam, who was drowned in his own well?" Mr. Conors nodded. "And Jennie—but she's a rare young lass now, and waits on table as well as I can do. If I could spare her I'd send her to school, fer she needs book learnin' more than she's got at present, but it's hard work I have to keep up the old place, and I'm not as able fer it as I was the first years after McVeigh died. Then I have Will Devitt's boy. He's past eighteen now, and handy about the stables. If it was not fer him I'm thinkin' old Donald would never manage at all."

"An' you'd take in the very nixt waif that comes along," declared Mr. O'Hagan.

"Maybe," answered Mistress McVeigh, thoughtfully.

Mr. Conors broke in with the question, "Where's yer own boy, Corney? It's a long while since he was about the place with his capers and curly head. Only t'other day my missus was talkin' about the time he and my Johnny learned to smoke behind my barn, and almost burnt the hull of us into the bargain."

A smile flitted across Nancy McVeigh's face at

the recollection. "My Corney's a wonderful lad, Mr. Conors. He doesn't take after either of his parents, fer he'd give over the best game in the world fer a book. He's livin' in Chicago, and he writes home now and then. He's makin' lots of money, too, the scamp, but he's like his father fer spendin'. Sometimes he borrows from me, just to tide him over, but he says that he will make enough money some day to turn the old tavern into a mansion. Then I'll be a foine lady, with nothin' to do but sit about and knit, with a lace cap on me head, and servants to do all the work. Though I'm afraid me old bones would never submit to that."

"Do ye believe the nonsense he writes, Mistress McVeigh?" questioned Mr. Conors.

"Aye, an' I do that, sir. It's me, his old mother, that knows the grit o' him, and the brains he has."

Tears were shining in Nancy's eyes, and she dried them on her apron, under cover of a sharp order which she called to a maid in the dining-room.

"Ye have a rare good heart in ye, Nancy McVeigh," Mr. O'Hagan commented.

"Heart, ye call it, sor. It's a mother's heart, and nothin' else," she answered, quickly, and then continued, somewhat bitterly, "It's nigh broke with anger and trouble this day. It's not that the work is hard, nor the trade fallin' away, for it has kept me and mine these many years, and it'll never fail while I have me health. But my interest falls due this month."

"It's a power o' interest ye hev paid that old

miser, John Keene, since McVeigh took over the tavern," Mr. Conors observed.

"It is that, Mr. Conors, and he treats me none the better fer it. A week come Tuesday he stalks into the bar here, and, before my customers, he threatens to put me into the road if I fail to have the amount fer him on the due date. I jest talked back to him with no fear in me eye, and he cooled off wonderfully. I have since got the money together, and a hundred dollars to pay on the principal, and to-morrow I'm goin' to give it to him with me compliments."

"Ye need not be afraid o' his puttin' ye out, Mistress McVeigh, begorra. He knows right well the place wouldn't be fit to stable horses in if ye were to leave it, and then who'd pay him his dirty interest?" sagely remarked Mr. Conors.

"Well, if that ain't James Bennet comin' along the road, and tipsy, too," broke in Mr. O'Hagan, catching sight of a new arrival from townwards.

"The likes o' him!" sniffed Nancy, contemptuously. "Not a drop will I serve him, the good-fer-nothin'! There's his poor wife with a two-weeks-old baby, and two other childer scarce able to walk, and him carryin' on and spendin' money as if he could afford it."

The three waited, watching in silence, whilst the semi-intoxicated fellow tumbled out of his rig and walked with uncertain footsteps to the tavern door.

"An' what be ye wantin' the night?" spoke up

Nancy, barring his entrance, and all the softness gone from her voice.

"Wantin', ye silly woman! what d'ye suppose I'd chance breakin' me neck gettin' out o' me buggy fer, but a drink o' yer best brewed?"

"Not a drop, James Bennet. Ye needn't come round my door askin' fer liquor. You, with a sick wife and a house full o' childer! It's a wonder ye're not ashamed. Better put yer head under the pump and then git ye home. Ye're no man at all, James, and I've told ye so before."

"It's not refusin' an old frien', are ye, Mistress McVeigh?" Bennet asked, coaxingly.

"Ye're no frien' o' mine, I'd like ye to understand, and if Mary O'Neil had taken my advice years ago, ye'd hev niver had the chance o' abusin' her."

"Ye're not doubtin' that I have the change?" pleaded Bennet, digging his hands deeply into his pocket, as if to prove his statement.

"More's the pity, then, fer it should be at home with yer wife, who'd know how to keep it."

"Ye're very hard on me," he whined, edging up the steps.

"Ye may thank yer stars I'm no harder," threatened the unyielding Nancy.

"I tell ye, Mrs. McVeigh, I'm burnin' with thirst, and I'm goin' to have only one."

"Ye're not, sor."

"I will, ye old shrew! Out o' my way!" he

exclaimed, with an ugly showing of temper, and moved as if to force an entrance. But Nancy McVeigh had learned life from the standpoint of a man, and, reaching forward, she sent him tottering from the verandah. Nor did she hesitate to follow up her advantage. With masculine swiftness and strength she seized him by the collar, and in a trice had him head downwards in the horse-trough.

"Now will ye go home, ye vagabond?" she exclaimed, with grim certainty of her power. The man spluttered and wriggled ineffectually for a few minutes, and then called "Enough!"

"Off with ye," she said, releasing him, but with a menace in her tones which suggested that to disobey would mean a second ducking. The drunken coward climbed into his buggy, muttering imprecations on the head of the obdurate hostess of the tavern as he did so. But he had no stomach for further resistance. Mr. Conors and Mr. O'Hagan had been interested spectators, and now came forward to untie their own horses, laughing loudly at the discomfiture of Bennet as they did so.

In the quiet of the early evening, when the modest list of boarders had eaten of the fare which the tavern provided, with small consideration of the profits to be made, Mrs. McVeigh put on her widow's bonnet, and a shawl over her gaunt shoulders, and, leaving a parting injunction to old Donald to tend to the bar during her absence, she set off down the road to the Bennets'. The night was setting in darkly and suggestive of rain, and

the way was lonely enough to strike fear into the heart, but the old tavern-keeper apparently had no nerves or imagination, so confidently did she pursue her intention to see how fared the sick wife of her troublesome customer of the afternoon.

Bennet met her at the door, and he held up his finger for quietness as he made way for her to enter. He was sober now, and evidently in a very contrite mood. He knew it was not for him that Nancy McVeigh had come, and he expressed no surprise. "She be worse the night," he whispered, hoarsely. Nancy shot a glance at him, half-pitying, half-blaming, as she stepped into the dimly-lighted bedroom, where a wasted female form lay huddled, with a crying baby nestled close beside her. Two children in an adjoining bed peeped curiously from under the edge of a ragged blanket, and laughed outright when they saw who the visitor was.

"Go to sleep, dears," Nancy said, kindly, to hush their noisy intentions.

"It's you, Mistress McVeigh?" a weak voice asked from the sick-bed.

"It is, Mary, and how are ye?"

Mrs. Bennet was slow in answering, so her husband spoke for her, and his tones were tense with anxiety.

"She's not well at all, at all."

Nancy turned impatiently to Bennet and bade him light the kitchen fire.

"I've brought somethin' with me to make broth,

and it's light food I'm sure that ye're wantin', Mary," she explained.

As soon as Bennet's back was turned, Nancy took off her wraps and drew a chair into the middle of the room.

"Give me the baby, Mary; yer arms must be weary holdin' it, and I will see if I can put it to sleep."

One thing Mrs. McVeigh's widowhood had not spoilt, and that was her motherly instincts in the handling of a baby, and the room seemed brighter and more hopeful from the moment she began to rock, singing a lullaby in a strange, soothing tone.

Mrs. Bennet gazed in silent gratitude for awhile, then she spoke again.

"The doctor was here."

"And what did he say?" Nancy inquired.

"I'm not goin' to get better," she faltered.

"Tut, tut, Mary! Ye're jest wearied out and blue, and ye don't know what ye say. Think of yer poor childer. What would they do without their mother?"

"I don't know," murmured Mrs. Bennet, beginning to cry. "The doctor says I might recover if I had hospital treatment and an operation. But it's a terrible expense. Just beyond us altogether. He said it would cost a hundred dollars at least."

"And would ye be puttin' yer life in danger fer the sake o' a sum like that?" Nancy said, feigning great unbelief.

"It may not seem much to such as you, Mrs.

McVeigh, who has a business, and every traveller spending as he passes by, but Jim is none too saving, and with three crying babes and a rented farm it's more than we can ever hope fer," answered Mrs. Bennet.

"Don't you worry one bit more about it, Mary. Maybe the good Lord'll find a way to help you fer the sake o' Jim and the childer," Nancy said, encouragingly, and then she went into the kitchen to direct Bennet in the preparation of the broth, the baby still tucked under her arm, sleeping peacefully.

It was almost midnight when Nancy arrived at the tavern. She carried a key for the front door, and passed up through the deserted hallway to her room. A child's heavy breathing a few feet away told her that Katie Duncan was in dreamland. Jennie had left a lamp burning low on her table, and Nancy carried it over to the cot and looked at the little plump face of her latest adoption. "Her own mother would smile down from Hiven if she could see her now," she thought. Presently she set the lamp back on the table, and ensconced herself comfortably in her capacious rocking-chair. Directly in front of her, two photos were tacked on the wall, side by side, and her eyes centred upon them. One was that of a boy, sitting upright, dressed in a suit of clothes old-fashioned in cut and a size too large for his body. The other, that of a young man with an open, smiling countenance, a very high collar, and a coat of immaculate neat-

ness of fit. It was a strange contrast, but Nancy saw them through the eye of a proud mother. A debate progressed within her mind for some time, and then she arose, with decision prominently expressed in her every movement. She unlocked a small drawer in the ancient black walnut bureau and withdrew a tattered wallet. Returning to her seat, she carefully spread out the contents, counting the value of each crumpled bill as she laid it on her knee.

"I'm not afeard o' old John Keene. There's sufficient to pay him his interest, and plenty left to keep Mary O'Neil at the hospital for a month or two," she muttered. She replaced the money with a sigh, but it was of pleasure, for Nancy never felt a pang when she had a good action to perform.

Next morning she sent Jennie over for Father Doyle, the parish priest. The good man was always pleased to call on Nancy, because she was a life-long friend, and her solid common-sense often helped him over the many difficulties which were continually cropping up in his work.

"It's something that has to be done at once, Father Doyle, and I think it lies with me to do it," she said, after they had gossiped awhile.

"I've known Mary O'Neil since she was the size o' my Katie, and many a day have I watched her and my boy Corney, as they played, before McVeigh was taken. It's no fault o' hers that their cupboard is empty, and it's something I can do that will not lose its value because of the habits o' the

husband. But ye must arrange a compact with Bennet not to take another drop if I help him. He loves his wife and would be a good man to her if he could control his appetite."

"But ye will be damaging your trade with your precious sentiments," Father Doyle remarked, to test, in a joking way, the principles of his charitable parishioner.

"I'm no excusin' my business, Father Doyle, and ye've known me long enough to leave off askin' me such questions. I have never taken the bread out o' a livin' creature's mouth yet, to my knowledge, and another might run a much rougher house, should I give it up."

"It's only a joke, I'm telling you," put in the priest, hastily; then he added, kindly, "You are a strange woman, Nancy McVeigh, and the road is no longer for your open doorway and the free pump. I have a mind to put in half of the amount with you in this case, though it is only one of many that I would do something to help if I could."

"Thank ye, Father Doyle. Ye have a keen understandin' o' what is good yerself; but ye'll be sure to name the compact with Bennet," cautioned Nancy, as she counted out fifty dollars from her assortment of bills.

"That I will," he answered.

The priest immediately went over to the Bennet place, and called the husband aside before mentioning his errand. He had long waited for some chance to secure an advantage over his thriftless

neighbor, and now that it had come he drove it home with all the solemnity and earnestness that he could command. Bennet listened with eyes staring at the earth, and the veins throbbing in his bared neck, until the talk had reached a point where he must promise.

"Father Doyle," he began, thickly, "I have been a sad failure since the day ye married me to Mary O'Neil, and Nancy McVeigh's tavern has been a curse to me an' mine; but, if ye will do this fer me, I'll swear never to touch a drop again."

"Say nothing against Mistress McVeigh. You owe her more than you think," Father Doyle interjected sharply.

"Perhaps," admitted Bennet, grudgingly.

"It's a compact, then," the priest observed, smiling away the wrinkles of severity, and they clasped hands over it.

That afternoon a covered rig passed by the tavern while the hostess was serving the wants of a few who had stepped in.

"It's Jim Bennet, takin' his wife to the hospital. Poor thing, she'll find a deal more comfort there than in her own home!" Nancy explained, in answer to the exclamations of curiosity.

"It's a wonder he doesn't stop for a drink," one of the bystanders remarked. But Nancy did not heed it, for she was thinking of two children playing in the road when she had a husband to shoulder the heavier duties of life.

CHAPTER II.

THE ANTAGONISM OF MISS PIPER.

Miss Sophia Piper had passed that period of life popularly known on the Monk Road as the matrimonial age. She had reached that second stage of unwed womanhood when interest in material things supersedes that of sentiment. She no longer sighed as she gazed down the stretch of walk, lined with rose hedge, that led from the verandah of her Cousin James' home to the Monk Road gateway, for there was no one in the wide world who might desire to catch her waiting on the step. Bachelors, especially young ones, were a silly set to her, useful only to girls who had time to waste on them. Her time was too precious, and she prided herself somewhat on the fact.

True, she had had her day. She well remembered that, and even boasted of it. Off-hand she could name a half-dozen men who once would have accepted the custody of her heart with alacrity, but she was too discerning. The Piper standard on the feminine side of the family was raised high, and he must be an immortal, indeed, who climbed to its dizzy height. She was past thirty-five, and had no regrets. She was a close student of the

Bible, and brought one text from it into her own life. "When I was a child I played as a child, but now that I am old I have put aside childish things." She often quoted this in defence of her industrious maidenhood.

She really felt that she had an object in life to accomplish, one that was wider than personal benefit. She occupied the chair as President of the Church Aid. For five years she had been the delegate to the County Temperance Convention. She was also a regular contributor to the religious columns of a city newspaper, and she held many other responsible duties within her keeping. Then, her cousin, James Piper, had three children to bring up properly, and their mother was dead. This work, along with the superintendence of the domestic features of his home, gave her plenty to fill up any spare time which she might have had. She took a pardonable pride in her station in the little community that knew her, yet above all she strove to exercise a fitting humility of spirit.

Her face was a pleasant one to see, shapely almost to prettiness, but growing thin and sharp-featured; though bright, smiling eyes made her appear more youthful than her years. Her hair, smoothed back from her forehead, was streaked with grey, and harmonized perfectly with the purity of her countenance.

Despite her brave front and ever-abundant faculty to console others, she had known trouble of a kind that would have crushed others of weaker

nature. From early girlhood she had been alone, her parents having died within a year of each other before she had passed her fifteenth birthday. She had no sisters, and her only brother had widened the gap between them by a life of recklessness.

Tom Piper was the exact antithesis of his sister. A good fellow with everybody, and liked accordingly; none too particular in his choice of comrades; a spendthrift, and unable to apply himself for long at any one occupation, 'twas a fortunate circumstance that Cousin James took in his orphan sister, otherwise she would have had the additional burden of poverty to harass her endeavors to sustain the respectability of the family. Tom might also have made his home with his cousin, but he showed no inclination to accept such charity. He was older than his sister, and quite able to take care of himself, so he thought. He secured work with a firm of timber contractors, and almost immediately disappeared into the wide expanse of pine in northern Ontario. Occasionally he wrote to his sister, and in his letters his big heart stood out so clearly that even her strict code of propriety could not stay the tears of sympathy which blotted his already bedaubed scribbling. When spring came, and the logs had been rafted down the river, leaving the timber men a few months of well-earned idleness, Tom's first action was to hasten out to the Monk Road to visit Sophia, and a very unconventional caller he proved to be. The rough life had taken off much of his

exterior polish, but otherwise he was the same good-natured Tom, generous to a fault, and, therefore, blessed with but little to give. These were grand opportunities for Sophia, and she lectured him roundly for his loose habits. She told him that he could have a good position in the neighboring town, and society more in keeping with the ancestors of the Pipers, should he so desire. But he always answered her with a laugh that echoed strangely through the quiet decorum of Cousin Jim's big house, then he kissed her for her advice.

"Never fear, little girl, I will never do any great harm either to you or the family. It is my way of enjoying life, and I guess I am a free agent. But keep on in your good work, and it will do for the both of us. I have brought something with me to brighten your eyes, sister. This will buy new clothes for you."

While he spoke, he counted out and handed over to her a large share of his winter's wages. This always made Sophia cry, and she would forget her scoldings for the balance of his stay.

As Tom grew older, tales travelled ahead of him, of his reckless spending and his drinking while in town. Cousin Jim heard them first, and he took Tom to task sharply whenever he met him. Then Sophia learned the truth, and her heart was almost broken. She prayed for her brother, and wept over him when he came to see her, and was rewarded with promises which were broken as soon

as her influence had worn off. Gradually a coldness grew between them. Tom, obstinately set in his way, and angry at the continued interference of his sister and cousin; Sophia hurt by his neglect and bitter from the sting of his disgraceful conduct; and Cousin Jim, hard, matter-of-fact business man that he was, refused to extend even the courtesy of a speaking acquaintance. So affairs ran along very unhappily, until, at last, Sophia determined to forget that Tom was her brother, and henceforth she put her whole soul into a crusade against sin, and Nancy McVeigh's tavern soon came under the ban of her displeasure.

Nancy's place was four miles from town on the Monk Road, and Tom Piper had found it a convenient spot for rest and refreshment, both going and returning from his visit to Cousin Jim's. Sophia had often warned him against the house, saying that it was an evil den, peopled with the thriftless scourings of the countryside, and presided over by a sort of human she-devil, who waited by the window to coax wayfarers in to buy her vile drinks. Tom answered by repeating some of the good acts traceable to Nancy McVeigh's door. He explained to her that the hostess was just a poor, hard-worked woman, who reaped small reward for her labors, and divided what she got with any who might be in need of it. He also told of waifs whom Nancy had mothered and fed from her own cupboard until they were old enough to shift for them-

selves. But Sophia was firm in her convictions, and only permitted herself to know one side of the story.

"No good can come out of that tavern," she had said, with a stamp of her foot and a fire in her eye that forbade contradiction.

Through the vale of years Sophia never forgot the grudge, and when she made herself an influence in the highest circles of reform, she turned with grim persistence to the agitation for the cancelling of the tavern license.

Nancy McVeigh, the woman against whom this thunderbolt was to be launched, kept patiently at her work. She had heard of the efforts being put forth, and often wondered why the great people bothered about one of so little consequence as herself. She did not fight back, as she had nothing to defend, but waited calmly, telling her neighbors, when they came to gossip, that they need not worry her with news of it at all.

Sophia championed her pet theme at the County Convention, and carried it to an issue where she and a committee were empowered to wait on the License Board with a strong plea in favor of the abolition of the tavern. The three stout gentlemen who listened to their petition were all good men who had families of their own and wanted as little evil as possible abroad to tempt their boys from the better path. They gave a long night's deliberation to the question, and then brought in a verdict that they would extend Nancy's rights for another year.

Sophia was completely overcome by the decision, and straightway sought out one of the Commissioners, a friend of Cousin Jim's, whom she knew quite intimately.

"Why did you do it?" she asked wrathfully.

"My dear Miss Piper," he replied, "perhaps you have not realized that Nancy McVeigh has a heart as big as a bushel basket, and we can find no instance where she has abused the power which she holds. If we take it away from her, some other will step into her place, and he might be ten times worse."

Sophia brought the interview to a close very abruptly, and went home angry and unshaken in her resolve; but an unexpected event changed the course of her meditation. Cousin Jim was planning a winter's stay in California for her and his children. She needed the rest and change, and so did the youngsters. Their preparations were completed in a few days, and the big house was closed. Thus the questions which had raised such an excitement were shelved for a more convenient season.

It was in the spring of the next year that Jennie, Nancy McVeigh's adopted daughter, brought her the news from town of Tom Piper's illness.

"The poor fellow's goin' fast, wi' consumption, and he's at the 'ospital. It was Dan Conors who told me, an' he said, 'Tom hasn't a dollar fer the luxuries he requires,'" Jennie explained. Nancy's face relaxed somewhat from its habitually austere expression when Jennie had finished.

"The idee o' that lad dyin', forsaken like that, an' his own sister gallivantin' about California. It's past me understandin' entirely," she remarked, as she fastened on her widow's bonnet and threw her heavy shawl over her shoulders.

"Tell Will Devitt to harness the mare, and I'll go and see what can be done fer him."

Nancy arrived at the hospital late in the afternoon, and was admitted to the sick man's bedside. She found him delirious and unable to recognize her, but instead he called her "Sophia."

"It's so good of you to come, Sophia. I knew you would," he kept repeating as he clasped her hand in his. All that night Nancy stayed by him, attending to his wants with the skill of a mother, and soothing him by her words.

In the morning he died.

"I guess it will be the potter's field," the hospital doctor told her, when she inquired about the burial. "He came here almost penniless, and has been in the ward six weeks."

Nancy gazed into space while she made some hasty mental computations. "What balance is due ye?" she asked, suddenly.

The doctor produced a modest bill, at half the current rate, amounting to twenty-five dollars. It meant a good week's business out of Nancy's pocket, but she paid it without objection. "I want the body sent to my tavern out on the Monk Road, sir, and ye can complete all arrangements fer a decent Christian funeral, an' I'll pay all the ex-

penses," she said, before leaving. She went to the telegraph office and left instructions to wire to all the known addresses of Miss Sophia Piper; then, satisfied with her day's work, she hurried home.

The tavern bar was closed during the two days while the body lay in the little parlor, and callers came and went on tiptoe, and spoke only in whispers. A steady stream of roughly dressed people, river-men and their friends, struggled over the four miles of snowy road to pay their last respects to the dead, and some brought flowers bundled awkwardly in their arms.

The night preceding the funeral, two great, long-limbed fellows, wearing top-boots, came stumbling into the tavern, more noisily because of their clumsy efforts at gentleness. Nancy knew them as former friends of Tom Piper, so she led them in at once. The men took the limit of the time usually spent there, and yet they were loath to go, and Nancy guessed that they had something further to say but scarcely knew how to commence. She encouraged them a little, and finally one spoke up.

"Ye see, Mistress McVeigh, Tommy wus one o' the boys, an' a pal o' ours, an' we hate to see ye stuck for the full expenses o' this funeral. God knows we owe him plenty fer the generous way he stayed by his mates, an' we don't want him receivin' charity from no one. We had a meetin' o' the lot o' us down town las' night, and every man put in his share to make Tom right with the world.

We've got fifty-five dollars here, and we want ye to take it."

The men counted out the money on the table, silver and bills of small amounts, until it made quite an imposing pile, then they placed a piece of paper upon it, with the words, written very badly, "For Tommy, from his pals."

They looked towards Nancy, and her averted face was wet. She did not sob, yet tears were streaming down her cheeks.

Sophia Piper was home in ten days, having received a message after considerable delay. The resident minister met her at the station and comforted her as well as his kindly soul knew how. He told her all the circumstances connected with the death and burial of her brother, and took particular pains to place Nancy McVeigh's part in it in its true light, as he had a warm spot in his heart for the old tavern-keeper. They drove together out to the home of Cousin Jim, where the servants had opened the house in preparation for their coming. The weather-stained gable of Nancy McVeigh's tavern, like some old familiar face, came into view by the way, and Sophia asked to be set down at the door.

Nancy, tall, angular and sympathetic, walked into her parlor to meet her guest.

The minister did not stay, but left them together, the younger woman sobbing on the breast of the older, who bent over and stroked the troubled head softly.

CHAPTER III.

JOHN KEENE'S EDUCATION.

"If the world had no mean people, there'd be little use fer kindness," remarked Nancy McVeigh to Moore, the operator at the railway junction, who always enjoyed a smoke and a half-hour chat with his hostess after his midday meal. They were discussing the escapades of young John Keene in the little parlor upstairs, whither Mistress McVeigh had gone to complete a batch of home-knit socks for her son, Cornelius, who lived in Chicago.

"I can't understand such a difference in the natures of father and son," Moore continued, after Nancy's interruption. "The father starts life penniless, without education, friends or business training. He settles in a locality where the majority of his neighbors find it a heart-breaking struggle to make ends meet, and amasses a fortune. Such a performance in a country where business is brisk and natural facilities favorable to the manipulations of a clever man would not be so surprising, but we all know the Monk Road has no gold mines or streams of commerce to disturb its dreamlike serenity."

A tone of irony pervaded Moore's words, for he was past forty, and had but a paltry bank account

and a living salary to show for his ten years' sojourn in the place.

"Compare the father's record with that of his son. The boy is given all the advantages that money can obtain, and plenty of time for growth, and he has also the example of his parent. Why, the lad was the terror of the school, never out of mischief, and costing his father a pretty sum to keep him from serious consequences. Before he was fifteen he spent his Saturdays carousing with the wildest set in the town, and incidentally built up a very unenviable reputation. Then he was sent to a city college. Did you hear the rumors that came back of what he did there?"

"There was some talk," Nancy agreed.

"Talk! Mistress McVeigh; downright scandal, I should call it! I know he was expelled for attending a party at the Principal's own home in an intoxicated condition, and afterwards fighting with a teacher who undertook to reprimand him."

Nancy looked up from her knitting, and an amused twinkle was in her eyes.

"The lad sowed wild oats sure enough, Mr. Moore, and good, tall ones, with full heads at that, but he's only an image o' his father, in that old John's recklessness runs to makin' money, and young John's to spendin'. It's not that I like bringin' up bygones, but the father was a bit loose in his day, too. I can remember, before old John married, he would come from town takin' the width o' the road fer his path, and singin' at the top o'

his voice something he learnt out o' a Burns' book o' poetry. It was the wife that he brought from the city, bless her good soul, that turned his work into a gold-mine. She guided him out o' his evil way and kept him hard at his dealin's from morning till night. It'll be the same with young John. He's spendin' his money now, and makin' the whole countryside ring with his pranks, but a foine miss'll spy him out some day, and then his mind'll forget his throat and dwell on his pocket. He'll never fail, fer he takes after his mother in the face, and she was the envy of the people the length o' the Monk Road, and farther. It's an old woman I'm gettin' now, an' I've watched many young men developin' character, an' I'm just a bit o' a judge. Ye'll admit I've had a grand opportunity to study their evil side, and what I don't see is told me by the neighbors; then their good side turns up after awhile, like a rainbow after a shower. I find it takes wise men to be really bad ones, but, after they've learnt their lesson, they see what a dried-up skeleton an evil life is, and then it's a race to make up fer their wasted years. Course, if a fool is led into idle habits, he must be led out again, and it's doubtful whether the process is very purifyin'. But it's different when a man like John Keene's son sees the error o' his ways. I tell ye, Mr. Moore, it's only a question o' time, an' young John'll be as set as his father, but he'll no be as tight, I'm thinkin'. He's got his mother's heart, ye know."

"You have rare assurance in the strength of

human nature, Mistress McVeigh. Perhaps it is because you're fairly strong in that quarter yourself," commented Mr. Moore, after he had digested Nancy's crude philosophy.

A smile crept into the corners of Nancy's mouth at the compliment, and she let it rest there a few minutes before replying.

"Ye've noticed that young John's a regular visitor at the tavern lately?" she asked.

"I have."

"Doubtless ye think I'm profitin' mightily with the money he passes over my bar."

"The gain will do you no good if you are," Moore declared, stoutly. His hostess was a very plain-spoken woman, and he knew that he could be equally outspoken and yet incur no disfavor.

Nancy lingered over his remark, carefully revolving its significance in her mind before attempting to defend herself.

"Tavern-keepin' is a mighty peculiar business, Mr. Moore. Ye're open to a lot o' criticism, and sometimes ye know in yer heart it's not quite fair. When I was married, my friends thought the inn would be a foine chance fer us to get along, so McVeigh bought it. I cooked good vittals, and waited on table meself in those days, an' times were brisk, because the railroad was bein' built past our door. Then McVeigh died, an' I had to stay by the old place, because I had nowhere else to go. 'Twas after that people began accusin' me o' fat-

tenin' on the bones o' their misfortunes. And d'ye know why?"

Moore remained silent, but his looks were expectant, so Nancy continued: "Because I was makin' enough money to pay me debts with and keep a respectable house. I have always endeavored to give honest value, and let no man go beyond his means in the spendin'. Of course, I must have my trade, fer my expenses are high, seein' that I keep a few children about me whom nobody else wants, an' I have my Corney to do fer occasionally, but I never made more'n I could comfortably get along with. My interest to John Keene is no such a small item, an' why should I refuse if the son helps me to pay it with his trade? It's no so unjust, ye see. But, for all that, I have a mother's love for young John. Ever since he was ten years old I have carried him into town in me buggy, wheniver he had a mind to go. Ye see, he an' me had some great talks then, an' since he brings all his troubles to me. While other people have been blamin' him fer his capers I've been makin' up my mind whether he will turn into the right again or no."

"And what think you about him now?" questioned Moore, won into a more conciliatory frame of mind.

"Ye can mark my words, Mr. Moore, the day is not far distant when young John Keene'll be the most respected man in the country."

Moore laughed doubtfully as he said, "I hope

so," and then hurried out, for it was past the hour when he should be at work. The day was very warm, and the sun's rays smote the grey sand of the Monk Road, reflecting back with trebled intensity. The traffic had ceased completely, and the quietness of Nancy McVeigh's tavern was undisturbed. Old Donald lay asleep in the haymow above the barn. Will Devitt had gone to town early in the morning, and Jennie and Katie Duncan were over at the cool edge of the lake, which lay a half-mile down the side road. Nancy was still sitting in the little parlor, but her knitting had dropped from her fingers, her eyes were closed, and her head pillowed against the chair-back.

A sudden noise awakened her, and going to the top of the stairs she saw two ladies hesitating in the entrance, as if they wished to come in but were somewhat doubtful of their welcome. One she recognized as Miss Sophia Piper, the housekeeper for James Piper, who owned the big house down the road; the other was a much younger woman and a stranger.

"Come up to my parlor, ladies," she invited, wondering what meant this unexpected visit.

"Thank you, Mrs. McVeigh," called Miss Piper, and the two of them ascended the stairs and took the seats which Nancy pushed into the middle of the room, dusting them carefully with her apron as she did so. Miss Piper had shown a kindly feeling to Nancy ever since the death of her brother Tom, and she addressed the tall, grey-haired woman

before her with a cordiality of manner and a lack of reserve unusual in her conversations with the commoners of the countryside.

"I hope you are well, Mrs. McVeigh," she began, as she seated herself comfortably.

"I'm not complainin', miss," Nancy answered.

"I've brought my dear friend Miss Trevor with me because we are both very anxious to do a little missionary work for the benefit of a mutual acquaintance whom we are interested in," Miss Piper explained with winning directness.

"Indade, Miss Piper, an' ye think I can help ye, doubtless."

"Yes, we are sure of it. It's Mr. Keene that we wish to speak about."

"Ye mean young John, of course," Nancy interrupted, as a smile gathered slowly over her rugged face.

"Young Mr. Keene, yes. I was his Sunday-school teacher, years ago, but since then, I am afraid, I have lost touch with him, until recently, when Miss Trevor brought him back to my mind."

"It's about his drinking," Miss Piper continued, nervously, as if at a loss to know how to broach the subject without giving offence.

"Ye come to blame me fer servin' him, I suppose?" Nancy suggested, without the slightest trace of animosity in her tones.

"We don't blame you, Mrs. McVeigh. Please do not misunderstand our intentions. The fact is, we know you to be—er—different from most

women, and your house is your living, but Mr. Keene is a young man with an exceptionally bright future, if he will only settle down to it. I have heard a great deal about you, Mrs. McVeigh, and I know the goodness of your heart from the part you took at Brother Tom's death. We were sure of your co-operation, and that is why we have come to you."

"And what can I do?" Nancy asked, kindly.

"Stop his drinking, please," burst out the younger woman, impetuously, and then she blushed furiously, while Miss Piper frowned. Nancy, however, let the remark pass unnoticed, and asked, with feigned innocence, "Is he yer young man, Miss Trevor?"

The girl, for she was easily under twenty-one, was more embarrassed than ever at the keen intuition of the old tavern-keeper, and an awkward silence ensued, during which Miss Piper vainly tried to say something to bring the conversation back to more conventional lines.

"Do you love him?" Nancy questioned further, relentless in her desire to enjoy the privileges of being a confidant in Miss Piper's plans.

Miss Trevor would have answered haughtily enough if it had been an ordinary acquaintance who thus probed into her secrets, but the strong, trustful influence of this woman humbled her into a schoolgirl demeanor.

"Yes," she answered, simply, and Miss Piper became more uncomfortable.

"Does he know it?" Nancy persisted.

"No,—er—perhaps. Oh, Mrs. McVeigh, you seem to have taken all my sense out of me," the girl gasped, helplessly, and covered her crimson face with her handkerchief.

"I'm glad to know this. Begging your pardon, Miss Piper, but if you come to me fer advice I must have more than half-truths. I've known Johnny Keene since he was a baby, and it's little good I've to his credit either, but I'm no sayin' it's not there. He takes after his mother, ye know. He's about run his course, and if Miss Trevor will take the word of an ould woman, who has learned from long experience, I'm thinkin' he'll be a good man fer her."

"You think so?" asked Miss Piper, brightening up.

"I'm sure of it, miss; it's in the blood, so it is."

The three women were now on a basis of plain understanding, and the balance of the conversation was easier and productive of results. After the two had departed, Nancy sat a long time gazing out of the window, and pondering the situation which had arisen. She did not entertain a doubt as to the ultimate fulfilment of her prophecies, but she wondered how long. The afternoon waned into evening, and she had a grand opportunity to knit and think, which two occupations were her chief enjoyments.

After supper, the usual company dropped into the bar. It was the common meeting-place for gossip

and good-fellowship, and during the early hours Will Devitt did a lively business. But a curious change was taking place within Nancy McVeigh. From her rocker, in the rear apartment, where she and the girls spent their evenings, she could hear the loud laughs and talking that passed between her customers, mingled with the clink of glasses, and the noise was offensive to her. The thought repeated itself in her mind, Was the continued harassing of her teetotaller friends awakening a new phase in her life? For the first time, perhaps, since her deceased husband had bought the tavern, her surroundings appeared distasteful, and almost sordid. More than once she arose and walked into the bar, where her presence was the signal for doffing of caps and a lowering of voices. She went for no particular purpose, and the men who were buying her liquor were surprised at the frown and curt replies which they received to their greetings.

"Nancy's in a bad humor," blurted one old fellow, who was a nightly caller, as she turned her back. Mistress McVeigh heard the remark, and it aroused her anger more than she would have cared to admit. She retraced her steps, and her glance wandered severely over the half-dozen men present.

"Ye should be at home with yer wife, Mr. Malone, and not wastin' yer toime waitin' about my premises fer some one to buy ye a drink," she said to the man who had spoken.

Malone laughed foolishly, and treated her words as a joke. He was on the verge of a maudlin

state, and prepared to contest his rights to be there.

"Another drink, Mr. Devitt, and a glass all round," he blustered, throwing a piece of silver on to the bar.

"No, Mr. Malone, ye have had yer fill, an' it's no more ye'll git the night," Nancy insisted.

Malone grumbled a reply, and some of the others took sides with him, and their demands were aggressively loud.

"I tell ye, it's no more liquor'll be served in this bar to-night," Nancy again declared, and stepping from behind, she began a steady movement towards the door. The men shot a few irresolute glances at Will Devitt, but his face gave no encouragement to disobey, and gradually they dispersed, all but Malone, who had a wish to be troublesome. His mutiny was short-lived, however, for Nancy's fingers suddenly clutched his collar, and she precipitated him on to the verandah, with scarce an apparent effort.

"I'm not well the night, Will, and the noise hurts my head," she explained to Will Devitt, as she passed into her sitting-room.

A crunching of wheels sounded from the roadway, and presently a rig came to a stop in the open sheds. Boisterous talking ensued, and then four young men came into the light of the hallway. They were all well dressed, and of a different class to the usual run of custom.

"Ho, Mistress McVeigh, a room please, and a few bottles of the best in your house." Almost

simultaneously Nancy appeared, and a tolerant smile again hovered in the corners of her mouth.

"Faith, an' are ye back again, John Keene?" she asked.

"I am, most assuredly; who could pass your welcome doorway without dropping in?" young John answered, laughing.

"It's high time ye quit yer loose ways," Nancy commenced, trying to frown, but her voice had none of the harshness of her previous ill-humor.

"No preaching, now, Mistress McVeigh," young John interposed, as he flung his arm affectionately across her shoulders.

"Ye're always takin' advantage of a poor ould woman," Nancy retorted, good-naturedly, as she led the way upstairs to the parlor, where Jennie had already placed a lamp.

"I've a bad head the night, sirs, so I'll be thankful if ye make no noise," she said, before descending the stairs.

The hours passed quietly enough, and, when it was closing time, she ordered Will Devitt to lock up the house and blow out the lights. The four young men still occupied the parlor, and the steady cadence of their voices came down to her. Will Devitt had supplied their order at the commencement, so that it was unnecessary to give them any further attention. It had been the rule for young John Keene and his companions to stay as long as it pleased them, and, when they had finished, to let themselves out with a key which he had coaxed out

of the indulgent hostess. Nancy knew that young John was using her rooms for gambling purposes. At first the knowledge disturbed her peace of mind, and she had determined to speak to him about it, but after mature consideration, her theory that until his sin had lost its pleasure it would be only driving him away from under her watchful eye to interfere, made her decide to wait.

"Sin in the loikes o' young John Keene is the same as a person sufferin' from the fever, and no remedy can successfully combat its ravages until the poison has worn itself out," she declared to Jennie, who had mildly criticised the appearance of the room after a night's occupation. The night previous to the call of Miss Piper and her friend young John had held Nancy in a serious conversation. From it she gathered that his conscience was disturbed, for he had made repeated references to his losses at the game, and vowed that could he forsake his idle habits without running the gauntlet of his friends' derision, he would be better pleased with himself.

"'Tis the work of a lady, Mistress McVeigh," he had confessed, and Nancy went to her bed with a light heart when she heard of it.

Nancy did not retire after Will Devitt had reported everything closed for the night. Instead, she went to her room and started a letter to Corney, her second effort in that direction in three months. Her correspondence was one of the sweetest trials of her existence. She took weeks of silent reflec-

tion between her busy spells to plan out what she would write before she was satisfied to take up her pen, and then her trouble began in earnest. This night it was next to impossible to compose her thoughts, as young John Keene's affairs had been thrust before her with startling vividness. The midnight hour passed, and still she sat by her little table, with pen lying flat on the paper and a great daub spreading outward from its point. Her head dropped upon her arm, and she was dreaming of Corney. The disturbance of the party breaking up in the adjoining room made her eyes open, and she listened intently, for she had a premonition that she had not seen the last of them. The men were talking in low tones, but with evident suppressed passion. Presently one spoke up clearly, as if in temper, and then she heard John Keene laugh, but it was a bitter, mirthless sound, as he replied, "I tell you, lads, I'm done with you all, so clear out, and I'll bide here till morning."

"Well, do as you d— please," the one addressed answered, and then a scuffling of feet echoed in the passage and went noisily down the stair. Nancy waited until they had closed the entrance door behind them, and then she stole out on tiptoe into the hallway. The door of the room which they left was ajar, and the lamp's rays struck out brightly from it. She stepped over and looked in cautiously. As she expected, young John was still there, seated tightly against the table, a pile of cards and some stained

"'Give me that gun, Johnny,' she called, softly."

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glasses in front of him. Something in his hand, and on which he was bestowing much attention, made her gulp down a sudden choking sensation.

"Give me that gun, Johnny," she called, softly.

"God! how you frightened me!" the young man ejaculated, as he wheeled around, and then continued shamefacedly: "I was just thinking of my mother, and wondering if she could see me now, when you spoke. I almost thought it was her voice."

Nancy stood over him, her masterful eyes looking into his, and her great hand reaching outwards. He laughed recklessly, but he handed her the weapon.

"Now, Johnny, I want ye to tell me all about it," she said, quietly.

"Mrs. McVeigh, I don't deserve your kindness. I'm not fit. But you are the only person in the world to whom I can turn. Those cads who just left me fleece me to my face, and then tell me I'm a fool to let them do it. My father has no faith in me. He never tried to find out if there was any good in my rotten carcass. And there is another who has weighed me in the balance of her judgment and found me sadly wanting."

"Now, Johnny, it's no like yerself to be talkin' like that. Haven't I told ye that yer conscience would rise up and smite ye. It's yer own fault that yer frien's are droppin' from ye like rats from a sinkin' ship. Yer plan o' life has been wrong, an' yer friends have been a curse to ye, an' it's

only yer manhood and that gal who kin save ye now." A fire burned in Nancy's eyes as she gazed at him, and John Keene felt a thrill of power, as if her strength was eating into his veins.

"You don't know the worst, Mrs. McVeigh, but I am ready to confess, and I don't expect you to pity me after I have spoken. I have cashed a forged note against my father at the bank for three hundred dollars, and the money is gone."

Nancy bent near to him and whispered as if telling her unspoken thoughts, "Ye have done wrong by yer father's money, John!"

The young man put his face in his hands and rocked to and fro for some minutes, while his body shook with suppressed emotion. A great joy surged through Nancy McVeigh's being, and her hand stole lovingly over his head and rested there. She knew that the change was upon him, and if victory came of it, John Keene of the past would be forgotten.

"Johnny, I've a letter from Corney in Chicago, and he says he could find a place fer just such a man as you. Ye must take it and work hard, and the first money ye earn ye must use it to make it right with your father."

"'Twould be sending me to hell to go there," John replied, looking up; and then, as if his answer was not as he wished, he was about to speak again, but Nancy continued in even tones:

"There was a certain young lass—I'll no tell ye her name, but she is fit fer the best man in the

world—came to me to-day and asked me to speak to ye fer her sake. Man, ye must be up and doin', fer she loves ye. She told me so with her own lips. Ye can go away fer two years. It's no time fer youngsters to abide, and when ye have proved yerself, come back an' she'll be waitin' and proud o' ye."

Young John Keene slowly rose to his feet. He took Nancy's hand in his and looked her squarely in the eye.

"You are not joking, Mrs. McVeigh?" he asked.

"As I hope to live, John Keene, I'm tellin' ye the honest truth," she replied.

"I'll do it," he muttered, hoarsely.

When Nancy went to her bed she gazed awhile at the two photos tacked on the wall, then at the sleeping face of Katie Duncan. "I've won him, thank God!" she murmured, and fell asleep smiling.

CHAPTER IV.

THE WRECK AT THE JUNCTION.

The widow McVeigh's face was a picture of sobriety, in fact, almost severity. The features were conspicuous because of the abrupt falling in of her cheeks, and her grey eyes were deep set and touched at the corners by plenteous crowsfeet. Yet when the world looked at her casually it saw a smiling countenance. Some thought her face hard, and the smile bold rather than a kindly one; others, that she was of coarse intellect and smiled because she could not appreciate the daily trials and troubles of the poor. These opinions were more generally shared by the good temperance folk of the neighborhood and in the town. They only saw a tall, grey-haired woman, standing amidst the surroundings of a ramshackle inn of the country road, and taking toll from the rougher classes that passed to and fro. But had they probed farther into her life they might have unearthed the beautiful from the clay.

Moore, the operator at the railroad junction, was a patron of Nancy McVeigh's tavern, of ten years' duration. He was a quiet fellow, a plodder at his work, and without great ambitions. He knew his

signals, the hour when trains were due, the words that the ticker in his little glass office spoke occasionally, and so far he was valuable to the Company. He never had had an accident, and because of his reliability his employers thought of him once every two or three years and added a hundred dollars to his salary. They made no allowance for illness or holidays, and it was Moore's proudest boast that he had never missed a day in all that time. One afternoon the superintendent stopped his car at the Junction and called the little man into his sanctum. Moore chatted with him for an hour or so, and that night his face was radiant as he smoked a pipe after supper and retold the conversation to Mrs. McVeigh. "It will mean higher pay and more responsibility," he observed, with a self-satisfied smile.

"And they'll make it a reg'lar station, ye say?" Nancy asked.

"That they will, Mrs. McVeigh. A company of city men are going to buy a large portion of the point and build on it a summer hotel. Then the people will be coming by the hundreds during the hot season, and there'll be baggage to check, tickets to sell, and a great deal of extra work. I am to have assistants, and a young fellow to handle the key, and I'll be stationmaster.

"Ye'll be gettin' married, surely?" suggested Nancy, with a sly twinkle in her eye.

"Well, no saying, but it will be a sore trial for me to quit your board," Moore answered.

"Ye understand I'm becomin' fairly old fer the tavern, and if those city men build a big house an' put in a big stock of liquors I guess there'll be no more fightin' about the license."

Moore deprecated any such result, and endeavored to argue Nancy into a like belief, but in his heart he knew that she was speaking the truth, and he really felt sorry for her.

From that day Moore began to study his work with greater zeal. Morning, afternoon and nighttime found him at his post, and the thoughts of his prospective advancement seemed to worry him. He grew thin on it, and also took a severe cold while tramping back and forth during bad weather. He would not take time to secure a doctor's advice, nor would he listen to Nancy when she scolded him for his neglect. The summer passed and the first brush of snow had come and yet he would not give in. His chief sent a letter explaining that the planned changes would go into effect the following spring. The news only added a glitter to his eye and a stimulant to his anxiety to prove his worth, but his cough still remained.

"The man'll break down and spoil everythin'," Nancy predicted to a crowd of gossips in her bar. Her prophecy came true sooner than she expected.

Moore received orders to throw the switch over to the sidetrack at the Junction, so that a work train might leave a few cars of gravel for the section-men to use the following morning. This train was due during the half-hour which he took for his

supper at the tavern. He shifted the rails ready before leaving, intending to hasten back in plenty of time to connect the main line over which the No. 4 passenger would pass about nine o'clock. It was quite a usual occurrence in his routine of work, so that the matter did not cost him a second thought.

Nancy noticed the tired look about his eyes as he sat at his meal, and she determined to talk to him seriously about his health at the first favorable opportunity. Out of doors the night was intensely black, and a drizzling rain added to its inclemency.

"It's just sich a spell o' weather as'll make his cough very much worse if he don't attend to himself," Nancy told Jennie, her adopted daughter, as they saw Moore go to his room before setting out for the Junction. The tavern settled down to its accustomed quietness, Nancy and the girls knitting in the kitchen, Will Devitt leaning over the bar and talking to a few who found it more comfortable there than in the raw dampness without. Old Donald was in the stables finishing up, and a chance wayfarer snored upon the sitting-room lounge. Katie Duncan had occasion to go upstairs, and she came down with the startling news that Mr. Moore had not left his room.

"He'll no git to be the station-master if he continues the likes," Nancy remarked, as she ascended to see what was the matter with him. She found him lying on his bed apparently asleep, so she shook him, in righteous indignation at his conduct.

A bottle from her bar, standing on the table, added suspicions to her wrath. Moore did not respond to her efforts as a healthy man should. Instead he turned a sickly white face to her and groaned.

"Are ye sick?" she asked.

"I must be. I can't stand up, I'm so weak," he answered faintly.

"Have ye been drinkin'?" Her eyes snapped as she asked the question.

"I've taken a little, because I'm ill, but—Heavens, woman! what is the time?" he almost shrieked.

"It's about nine o'clock," she answered.

"Nine," he spoke as if struggling with a failing memory. "The switch is wrong, and there's a gravel train on the sidetrack. God! Mistress McVeigh, help me to get up." He tottered to his feet, groping for the door like a blind man, and then Nancy caught him in her strong arms and laid him back on the bed.

"Jennie, Mr. Moore's sick. Ye'll attend to him," she called, as she threw a heavy shawl over her head.

If those who doubted Nancy's unselfish heart and courage could have seen her plodding through the darkness, with the rain pelting down upon her, and the mud halfway to her knees, they might have forgiven much that they had believed against her. She knew the turnings of the switches and the different tracks, and it was to save Moore from disgrace, rather than to avert a disaster, that caused

her to tax her old bones to their utmost, as she climbed over the fences and ran across the fields. A whistle sounded far over on the town side, and she was conscious of a dull throbbing in the air. Foot by foot she counted her chances, listening to the approaching train and exerting herself to the limit. The headlight of the locomotive was glaring at her as she climbed the sandy embankment of the track, and then, as her hands closed over the lever, the great machine went thundering by over the wrong rails. The engineer evidently had read that the signals were somewhat amiss, for his air brakes were already screaming, and he was leaning far out of his cab with his hand shading his eyes. The sand cars were a short distance up the track, and the moving train struck them with a terrific rending of iron and hissing of escaping steam. The force of the contact was lessened because of the sudden slowing up of No. 4, but it was sufficient to send two of the passenger coaches tumbling on to the boggy earth six or eight feet below the track level. The engine stood still on the rails in a cloud of steam, and the engineer was out of his cab limping towards Nancy before her mind had regained its normal conception of things. His appearance roused her to instant action. She made no explanations, nor were any questions asked of her, but the two of them ran to where the crying of pain-stricken humanity came from the derailed cars. A chaos of confusion reigned. People who were not hurt were shouting hysterically, others

were making efforts to liberate the wounded. Nancy was strangely cool. She sent one to the tavern to summon help, another to the Junction to telegraph into town for doctors, and then she turned to those in the wreckage. One after another was extricated from the mass, and as they came before her on the wet grass, where coats and everything that could be found were used to lay them upon, she examined their hurts, bound up bleeding cuts, and did all that her knowledge could suggest. Soon a crowd from the neighborhood gathered and they joined in the work, and then the doctors came. By this time a second woman was helping by Nancy's side. The old inn-keeper paused once to see who it was, and nodded in recognition.

"It's a sad business, Miss Piper," she remarked, huskily.

Soon a long procession slowly wound its way across the fields to the tavern, men carrying those unable to walk, and the others who were not so badly hurt leaning on the shoulders of their companions. Nancy and Miss Piper went with the first to prepare beds and other necessaries, and all that night the two women stayed by their grim task.

"You should be a nurse," young Dr. Dodona observed to Sophia Piper, during a moment's respite.

"I would, gladly, if I had that woman to help me," she answered, and they both turned to watch Nancy, who was deftly binding a fresh bandage on the crushed leg of an elderly gentleman who

seemed more concerned over the soiling of his clothes than his wound.

"Are you tired, Mrs. McVeigh?" she asked, kindly.

Nancy only smiled back a reply, and bent her grey head over her patient again.

Thirteen slightly injured, three seriously, and no deaths, was the result of the accident, and after a few days everything at the Junction was as it had been always, excepting that Nancy McVeigh's tavern had won a new guest and lost an old one. Moore had recovered from his attack a few hours after his seizure, and was taken into custody by the law to stand his trial for wilful neglect of duty, and Mr. Lawrence Hyden lay in his room with a very impatient temper and a badly crushed leg. The Wednesday of the following week was set as the day for Moore's trial, and Nancy received a summons to appear as a witness.

"I'll do that with pleasure, sure, fer it's meself that's doubtin' the senses of yon pack o' lawyers. It's jist capital they are tryin' to make out o' this affair to injure me in the eyes of the Commissioners, I'm thinkin'," she said, when the blue paper was handed to her.

The scene in the courtroom was highly interesting to her, and she wondered, as she listened to the learned talking, how their charge against Moore could have any foundation. When her name was called she was fully prepared to give them all a piece of her mind.

"Now, Mrs. McVeigh, the whole case against Mr. Moore rests on your testimony. We want to know from you if the accused was addicted to the use of liquor," the presiding counsel asked, in suave tones.

"He was not, yer worship," she answered, promptly.

"But one witness states that liquor was found in the accused man's room, and also that his breath was strongly tainted shortly after the time of the accident," the counsel continued.

The whole truth of the misunderstanding suddenly came home to Nancy, and after some bickering between the lawyers, she was allowed to narrate, in her own homely way, the current of events from the first time she had noticed the illness coming over Mr. Moore, until she had stood by the switch watching the train going to destruction. Every man in the room had heard somewhat of Nancy's peculiar existence, and they listened with doubly aroused interest to her simple tale. Suddenly an interruption came from a very unexpected quarter. Moore was swaying unsteadily, and but for the timely arm of the officer near him, would have collapsed on the floor. The court immediately adjourned whilst a doctor was sent for.

"There'll be no case, Mrs. McVeigh. It is clear in my mind that the prisoner is a very sick man and should be sent at once to the hospital. If I have my way the verdict of this examination will be a testimonial of some substantial nature to be

given to a very generous-hearted old lady," the counsel said, shaking her hand warmly.

"An' who are ye blarneyin' now, Judge?" Nancy asked, not the least bit abashed at the learned man's importance.

"A certain Widow McVeigh, of the Monk Road," he answered, laughing.

'Twas a short time after this that ugly rumors of rowdyism were spread over the countryside, and while matters were at white heat the question of cancelling Nancy McVeigh's tavern license was again brought before the Commissioners. Miss Sophia Piper heard of the complaint, and made it her business to interview the stout gentleman on the Board with whom she was on friendly terms.

"You came to me once to urge the abolition of this license, but now you defend the woman," he said to her, in surprise.

"I know that Mrs. McVeigh is honorable and good, and this report is being circulated by parties who wish to secure her rights for their own purposes. If liquor is to be sold on the Monk Road, then, sir, I can speak for the whole temperance people of that section. Let Mrs. McVeigh have the selling," she answered, pleadingly; and so the license was extended for another year, as usual. But Moore did not receive the appointment as master at the new station of Monk the following spring.

CHAPTER V.

JENNIE.

Mr. Lawrence Hyden stayed at Nancy McVeigh's tavern on the Monk Road while his leg, which had received a severe crushing in the railroad accident at the Junction, healed sufficiently for him to depart for his home in the city. During his sojourn the widow McVeigh was ofttimes sorely tempted to take him out and stand him on his head in the horse-trough, so cantankerous was he over his enforced idleness. She had plenty and to spare of compassion for weaklings, who had not physical strength such as hers to carry them through troubles, but this irate old man only annoyed her. She had not been well herself since that long night's work in the rain, when half of the passenger train had toppled into the ditch, and her patience was correspondingly short-lived. The doctor who attended Mr. Hyden noticed the weary look about her eyes, and offered his advice.

"You should go to bed for at least a fortnight," he suggested.

Nancy smiled as she replied: "'Twould be a merry riot, surely, doctor, if I gave in to my complaints, with noisy customers downstairs and two cranky patients above."

However, she gave over the attendance on the obdurate old gentleman, who from force of necessity was her guest, to Jennie, her adopted daughter.

"If he finds too many faults, Jennie, just leave him a spell without his food. That'll teach him to value the fare with a kinder grace," she explained.

Contrary to Nancy's expectations, Jennie wrought a wonderful change for the better in her patient. Mr. Hyden seemed to form an attachment for the girl from the very beginning.

"You remind me of someone," he remarked during the first few hours of her service; and afterwards he would listen to Jennie for a whole evening while she struggled through some reading matter. One evening he told her about a grandchild of his whom he had lost through being over-harsh with the mother, and his words impressed Jennie so much that she retailed them to Mistress McVeigh the very next morning.

"It's no unloike yer own mother's troubles," Nancy observed, critically.

"And will ye tell me of them, Granny?" Jennie asked, eagerly, for it had often been hinted to her that Nancy McVeigh was not her grandmother.

"It's a burden o' sorrow, dear, and not fit for young ears to listen to," Nancy replied, evasively.

Jennie, however, was not satisfied, and the next time that Mr. Hyden was in a talkative mood she introduced the subject to him. He seemed deeply interested, and promised that he would endeavor to persuade Mistress McVeigh to divulge her secret.

After Mr. Hyden could hobble from his room to other parts of the house, a photo of Jennie's, taken when she was a very young child, disappeared from the upstairs parlor, and Nancy suspected at once that her guest had taken it. She told Jennie to look for it when she was cleaning up his room, and sure enough, she found it amongst a miscellany of papers and letters which littered his table. This was enough to rouse Nancy's ire to a point where an understanding of all grievances up-to-date was necessary, so she proceeded upstairs, with a sparkle in her eye which boded ill for the victim of her wrath. He was in his room, writing, and without waiting for him to finish, as was her custom, she demanded the lost photo.

"I have it, Mistress McVeigh. I meant to put it back in its place, but it slipped my memory," he stammered, guiltily; and then he asked her, frankly, "May I keep it?"

"Kape the swate child's picture, the only wan I have, barrin' her own silf! Ye have great assurance to ask it!" Nancy exclaimed, though somewhat mollified at his mild explanation.

"My son married beneath him, and I treated his wife very badly. They had one child, a girl, and I have often wished since that I could discover her whereabouts. I have a sort of guilty feeling that I was not exactly honorable in my dealings with my daughter-in-law, and it has so preyed on my mind that I think every strange child may be hers. I remember seeing the mother two or three times, and

her face peers at me now when I am in reverie. A vengeance of fate for a social crime, I expect," he said, laughing nervously. Then he continued: "You may wonder, Mistress McVeigh, why I am telling you this, but your Jennie's face is that of my son's wife. It may be the result of long years of remorse which have created a myth in my brain, but when she comes to wait on me the likeness is very real. I hope you will excuse my action in taking that photo, and perhaps you will sell it." Mr. Hyden spoke seriously, lest Nancy should suspect him of subterfuge.

"Sure, sir, ye think it is like yer own flesh and blood?" Nancy questioned, softly, her eyes filling suddenly.

Mr. Hyden's brow contracted into a frown, and he seemed on the point of regretting the confidences which he had spoken, but Nancy interrupted him.

"Jennie is not my own," she said, sadly.

"Not your own!" he ejaculated, pausing in the act of handing back the photo. "I knew it, for that child is no more of your family than I am, even to the eyes of a stranger, begging pardon if I speak too freely."

"Perhaps ye would care fer the story?" Nancy asked, beaming with renewed friendliness.

"Please tell it, Mistress McVeigh," he answered, eagerly, as he pushed a chair towards Nancy and seated himself. Nancy gave herself over to silent musing for a few minutes, and Mr. Hyden prepared his pipe in the interval.

"Jennie'll be eighteen come twentieth o' March," Nancy began, then checked herself while she counted on her fingers. "No, maybe nineteen," meditatively. "Ye see, Mr. Hyden, times on the Monk Road are so much the same that one fergits the exact date o' things. Anyhow, it all occurred the year before the railroad was completed through these parts, fer well I remember takin' Jennie in me arms across the fields to see the first passenger train go by the Junction, with her engine all flags, and banners hung the length o' the cars with mottoes in big red letters on them. Dan Sullivan, Heaven rest his soul, was the engineer that day, and fer five years afterwards he took time fer lunch at the tavern until he was killed up the line somewheres. There were a lot o' officials on board that day, too, and the Superintendent came out o' his car to pat Jennie's head. He could not help it, fer the child had a winsome mass o' golden curls, if I do say it meself." Nancy paused to sigh, and Mr. Hyden interposed:

"I was on that train, Mistress McVeigh, and I remember the scene, now you mention it."

"Were ye?" Nancy exclaimed, incredulously.

"To finish about Jennie's comin' to me. It was the previous year that they built the bridge over the Narrows a mile or two back from the Junction. I had most o' the men stayin' at the tavern, and the likes o' the business I have never had since. But I was younger then, and the work never tired me. The foreman's name was Green, and he occupied the big room with the gable window."

"The scamp—er—I beg your pardon, Mistress McVeigh, but I knew that fellow, and his name wasn't Green," interrupted Mr. Hyden.

"I thought as much, sir," continued Nancy, "for he carried on something awful with the table help and the girls along the road, and it was just his way to leave no traces o' his real name behind him. But he was not a bad fellow, mind ye. As liberal in his spendin' as if he couldn't abide the feelin' o' money, and as nice a gentleman about the house as any one could wish fer. He was a handsome chap, too, and lively with his tongue. The pick o' the whole countryside was his, and it was the joke o' the tavern, who'd be his next love. I was terrible busy at the time, but I heard the men talkin' at the bar and at their meals, an' I knew there was scarcely two girls on speakin' terms with each other over him. Finally he settled down to courtin' Florence Raeburn, the daughter of old Silas, who owns the big stock farm on the fourth concession. The Raeburns were English, an' they had high notions o' their position. The mother was dead, and the three girls managed the home. Florence was the youngest, and the other two were older than her by ten years or more. Consequently, they thought her a bit flighty, an' needin' o' some restriction. They did not let her associate with any o' the neighbors, an' a great fuss they raised when she made friends with me while her horse took a drink at the trough when she was passing. I pitied the child, fer she had a pretty face, an' big, sad eyes

that seemed to yearn fer companions. After that, the sisters drove her in to town to school in the old buggy which their father had brought from England. However, she managed to see me quite often, and I encouraged her, although, mind ye, I never let her know the looseness o' the ways o' a tavern. The sisters had the Methodist parson picked out fer her, an' he, poor man, was fair crazy fer her heart, too, but she had the givin' o' it herself, and this it was that caused all the trouble.

"Green, the foreman, spied her talkin' to me on the verandah one day, an' he came out an' praised her horse—a sure way to win her approval, fer she was very fond o' the animal. I believe the young minx had seen him before, fer she was over-ready to converse with him, an' whin I left them they were talkin' and laughin' like old friends. That was the beginnin', and soon the rumor went about that the foreman had at last met his match. She occupied his time so much that the bridge work was like to suffer, an' I heard that a letter came from the city askin' about the delay. The sisters bitterly resented the clandestine meetings when they heard o' them, an' Florence had a weary time o' it between their scoldin's and the tongues of envious neighbors, but she was a wilful child an' liked to have her own way regardless o' their interferin'. I was afeard o' the outcome mesel', an' I spoke my mind freely to Mr. Green. He resented my words at first, an' then, whin he saw that I was really anxious, he told me that he loved her an' would

do what was honorable in the matter. I knew that he was earnin' big pay, an' was well brought up an' educated, so I tried to convince meself that he would make Florence a good husband; but I can't abide people flyin' in the faces o' their families in such matters, an' I told Florence so one day when she had dropped in fer a drink o' buttermilk. She just took my hands in hers, an', lookin' me in the eye, said, 'Mrs. McVeigh, ye do not understand. He is a fine, strong man, an' will take me away to the city, where my sisters can't make my life a burden. They are like ye, and doubt the worth o' him, but I have had more chance than any o' ye to study his character, and I know that he can make me happy.' I just couldn't reason with her against that opinion, so I prayed every night that she wouldn't be disappointed, and every day I lectured Green about his sinful habits, an' impressed him with the sweet smile that fortune was beamin' upon him, and how careful he must be not to shake the maid's faith in him. 'Never fear, Mistress McVeigh, I'm solid forever now,' he answered, laughing at my seriousness.

"'Twas only a short while afterwards that a telegram came to Green to go to the city. He told me o' it with a very grave face, an', says he, 'We must be married to-night, an' I will return in a week, after I have completed my arrangements in the city.' I knew he meant it to be a secret ceremony at my tavern, fer the sisters would niver permit it at home. I worried all day long, wonderin' what

was my duty in the matter, one moment ready to go over an' tell the family o' their plans, an' nixt feelin' guilty at my disloyalty to the brave girl. The preacher came, an' they were married that night."

"They were married that night?" interrogated Mr. Hyden, who had been following Nancy's story intently.

"They were, surely," declared Nancy, positively, as if resenting the interruption.

"Thank God!" he muttered, as he resumed the smoking of his pipe.

Nancy gazed at him queerly for a few moments, and then continued: "Green left for the city nixt mornin', an' Florence went back to her home with my kiss on her lips as a weddin' gift. A month passed, an' I was wonderin' why Florence had not been over to see me, an' then Silas Raeburn came into my tavern in a mighty rage. 'Ye old witch, where's my girl?' he roared.

"I was so surprised at his words that I didn't know what to say, but I knew my face was a guilty one to him.

"'Ye have encouraged her in her disobedience against her own family, and then ye let a drunken rascal steal her from me to crown our disgrace,' he went on fiercely. Fer once in my life I stood silent, too ashamed to answer him, while he heaped words upon me that would be unfit to repeat in decent company. He was fair torn with anguish and temper, an' I let him have his say. Then, when he

was calmer, I told him all I knew, from the first meetin' o' Florence with the bridge foreman. He listened, breathing sort o' sharp, as if my words hurt him, an' then of a sudden he went white an' tremblin', an' dashed out into the darkness o' the night.

"I hoped that Florence had met her husband in the city, an' that they were happy, an' I comforted myself with these reflections, but always had to fight a doubtin'. The people talked o' it fer a long while, but it was a forbidden subject in my house, an' one man went out o' my bar with more speed than dignity, for mentionin' her name in my hearin'.

"One bitterly cold night in December, a farmer came in from the road with strange news. 'I found a woman an' child freezin' by the roadside, an' I just brought them on to ye,' he said. 'Bring them in an' welcome,' I answered, an' then the woman slipped by him an' was sobbin' in my arms.

"'Florence, darlin', is it ye?' I asked, with my own feelin's stirred so that I could scarcely speak. She pushed me away from her with a sort o' frenzy, an' she says, 'Ye should not shelter the likes o' me, whose own people have turned their backs fer the shame o' it.'

"'Ye trust me, surely, darlint,' I answered, takin' her baby from her arms, an' leadin' the way to the kitchen, where we would be alone, with a great, cracklin' fire in the stove to sit by. I gave her food and comforted her, an' tended the baby, while she told me about hersilf, with an occasional spell o'

cryin' an' a wild, weird expression on her face that gave me bad dreams fer many a night.

"'He was more than bridge foreman,' she said, 'he was a son o' the contractor himself, an' when he left for the city, the mornin' after our marriage, it was to go away to forrin parts, South America or some other outlandish place. His father made him do it, fer he was full o' pride, and wanted no country lass as a wife fer his son. I stayed at home as long as I could, an' then my sisters discovered the truth. They scolded me dreadfully, an' my father threatened to lock me up. That evening I walked into town, an' took the train fer the city. I searched fer two or three days before I learned the true name o' my husband, an' when I went to his home, which was grander than any building I had seen before, they told me I was crazy. I had married a man named Green, and he was not their son. I knew that they were deceivin' me, but I was frightened an' I hurried away. I struggled fer a while alone, an' then, when the baby came, a good woman out o' pity took me in an' kept me till I could go to my work again. Then his family heard o' the child an' sent fer me. When I called, they told me that they were sorry for me an' wished to help me, although they would not admit that they were bound by law to do so. They had secured permission to place my baby in a home, an' I was glad enough o' the chance, fer I was afeared that I could never support it myself. I had the privilege of seeing her once or twice a week, an' those visits

were the bright spots in my life. I worked very hard, thinkin' that it would cure my broken spirit an' the yearnin' which I had fer my child. But it seemed useless to try, fer my will power was weakened by my sufferin', so I went over to the home, an' the good people, knowin' that I was her mother, let me take her out with me for an airin'. I just couldn't part with her again, so I went to my rooms, gathered my clothes into a bundle, and started fer home. I was sort o' wild then, an' did not know what I was doing, but now I know that I did wrong, fer there is no welcome fer me under my father's roof.

"'Will ye keep me fer a week, till I am stronger, Nancy McVeigh?' says she, 'an' then I'll go back, an' perhaps I'll be more content.'

"I tell ye, Mr. Hyden, my heart bled fer the lass. The likes o' her pleadin' with a rough old tavern-keeper fer her very livin'. 'Ye did right to come home to me, Florence Raeburn. I'm not ashamed to have ye here,' I answered her."

Mrs. McVeigh paused in her story to wipe away the tears which were stealing down the furrows in her cheeks, but Hyden, in a strange, hard voice, bade her proceed.

"The mother died two weeks afterwards, sir. I think it was her lungs that were affected, but never a word of it did I send to Silas Raeburn or his people. I could not fergit the sting of the words he had spoken to me. I felt that it was my secret, an' when I took the baby from Florence's

arms fer the last time, she smiled and whispered, 'Ye'll no give Jennie up, Nancy. Ye'll be a mother to her yersilf?'"

"I am judged! I am judged!" broke in Mr. Hyden, standing before her, his features working in a desperate struggle with his emotions. Then he spoke with more calmness. "She is my grandchild," he said.

The days that followed were full of torture for the old keeper of the inn. Mr. Hyden wanted to take Jennie back to the city with him to be educated. He would do for her all that he could, as the repentance for his harshness to Jennie's mother was upon him. He waited day by day, until Nancy could make up her mind. Of all Nancy's troubles this was the sorest, for Jennie had been closer to her than her own son. Her years were creeping over her, and she leaned on the young girl for sympathy and advice. Yet in her heart she knew that Jennie must go, and it was her duty to permit it. Her victory came suddenly, and one morning saw her face free from clouds, and in their place a glimpse of her old kindly smile.

"Take her, Mr. Hyden, an' make her a lady, fer the lass is above the best that I can give her. You'll let her come to see me sometimes, an' ye'll promise to be good to her?" she asked, wistfully. So it was that Jennie left the old tavern on the Monk Road, jubilant in her innocent way at the happy prospects which old Nancy painted for her, but when she was gone Nancy turned to her work again with a heavy heart.

CHAPTER VI.

NANCY'S PHILOSOPHY.

NANCY MCVEIGH was in her garden behind the tavern when young John Keene called on her for the first time since his return from Chicago, after two years' absence from the homely atmosphere of the Monk Road.

Nancy's garden was a source of great enjoyment to her, and many happy hours she spent within the enclosure, which old Donald had built so securely that not even a chick could trespass to harm the sprouting seeds. Early spring saw her with tucked-up skirt, a starched sun-bonnet on her head, and hoe or rake in her hand, availing herself of every quiet hour in the day to plant and mark out the beds. Then followed a ceaseless watchfulness, throughout the hot summer, to regulate the watering and weeding, interspersed with pleasant speculation as to the results, and in the later months her well-merited boastings over her success.

She was picking beans for the dinner, and incidentally noting the progress of her early vegetables, when Katie Duncan ushered young John Keene through the tavern to the rear door and into the garden.

"At your old tricks, Mistress McVeigh," the new-comer called, cheerily, as he advanced with outstretched hand.

"Well, bless me soul, Johnny!" she exclaimed, rising and kissing him with motherly blindness to his manly appearance. "I heard yesterday that ye had returned. Mrs. Conors told me, an' she said ye might be takin' a wife before ye leave. She's a rare gossip, that body, an' knows a thing a'most before it happens," Nancy added, in an explanatory way.

"As if you didn't know that yourself," young John answered, laughing.

"The two years went by so quick like, that I scarce felt the loss o' ye. Faith, an' the older one gets the shorter the days, it seems. The garden's lookin' promisin'," she observed, inviting his opinion.

"Splendid!" he replied, giving it a hasty scrutiny.

"I've beans, an' radishes, an' new potatoes already, an' the cucumbers and corn'll be fit to pick in a week," Nancy said, proudly. Then she remembered her hospitality.

"We'll go in the house, fer it's not a very clean place fer ye to be wi' all yer fine clothes."

"I'd rather we just sit down on those two chairs by the porch and have a good talk," he suggested. They seated themselves in the shade, for the morning sun was very warm, and young John lighted a cigar.

"Have ye been doin' well since ye left?" Nancy inquired.

"Aye, Mistress McVeigh. Corney helped me, you know. I went to work in his office the very day of my arrival in Chicago, and, thanks to your advice, I never allowed my old habits to interfere with my progress."

"Ye didn't think I doubted yer ability to do that?" she asked, reproachfully. Then, with a twinkle of humor in her eyes, she added, "It was yer love fer a certain young lady that kep' ye at it."

"Maybe," he assented, meditatively.

"An' I suppose Corney has a grand place, wi' a desk and books as thick as a family Bible?"

Young John laughed. "His office is as big as your house. He has twenty desks and a clerk for each one, and a private room, all glass, and leather-bound furnishings. I tell you, Mrs. McVeigh, your son has developed a wonderful business, and you will live to see him a rich man, too," he remarked, enthusiastically.

"Well, d'ye hear that now, the brains o' him! I always knew it!" Nancy ejaculated, with tears of pride glistening for a moment in her eyes. "It's been in me mind these ten years to go there an' see him. D'ye think he'll likely be Mayor o' Chicago?" she asked, wistfully.

Young John quibbled with an easy conscience. "His chances are as good as the best of them," he said. "But tell me about yourself, Nancy.

How have you been keeping? And have you had any more young men to reform since I left?" he asked, suddenly changing the subject.

"Oh, barrin' the cold I got whin Moore left the switch open at the Junction, an' the pain at me heart over losin' Jennie, I'm as fit as iver," she answered, complacently. "Ye heard about Jennie's leavin'?"

"Corney read your letter to me," young John replied, sympathetically.

"It was a trial, to be sure, but I'm not complainin'. It's better fer the lass, and Katie Duncan helps me a'most as much. 'Ye see, Johnny, I'm goin' to be satisfied in this life, no matter what troubles I meet. I've plinty o' belongin's, an' a deal o' honest work to do, which leaves no time fer frettin'. I've had me ups and downs, an' it seems I've known all the sorrows o' me neighbors as well as me own, but I just keep smilin' an' fergittin'. There's so many bright spots whin one looks hard fer them. It's one thing to be wishin' fer somethin' in the future that never comes, and another to be content wi' the blessin's that we get every day. I try fer the last. Some people, if they had me tavern, would be wantin' a better house, or a fresh coat o' paint every year er two. If they had me garden they'd hope that a good angel would grow them enough fer themselves and a profit on what they could sell. They'd be always envyin' the Raeburns' fine horses, an' the grand house o' James Piper, an' their servants, and thinkin' the world was treatin' them unkindly because wishin' wouldn't satisfy

their desires. But it's me honest pride in makin' the best o' things, and bein' thankful they're no worse, that keeps me smilin'."

"You are quite a philosopher," observed young John, gazing at her with the old affection lighting up his features.

"Philosopher or not, I care not a whit, but so long as Nancy McVeigh runs a tavern on the Monk Road there'll be no lost sunshine," she declared.

"Father tells me that the city company are building a summer hotel on the Point, and also that you may have to sell out," young John remarked, cautiously, lest he hurt the old inn-keeper's feelings.

"Faith, an' he's speakin' the truth, too," Nancy replied quite unconcernedly, and then she laughed quickly to herself at some recollection.

"I must tell ye about it, Johnny," she explained. "When the agent came up from the city to go over the property, he walks up and down past the tavern wi' a sheet o' paper in his hand, an' a map, or somethin' o' that nature. I went out on the verandah to see if he had lost his way, an' he comes over an' takes off his hat as politely as if I was the Queen.

"'Your tavern stands just where we want to put the gateway,' he remarked, consultin' his paper.

"'Is that so?' says I, my temper suddenly risin', fer I had heard a lot o' talk about the big hotel an' the driveway fer the carriages, an' the parks.

"'Of course, we will allow ye a fair price fer yer property when we need it,' he explained.

"'If ye think yer price'll put a gateway here,

ye're sadly mistaken,' I said. 'Ye can put up yer hotel, an' every drop o' spirits that's sold in the country can go to ye, an' I'll no complain, but I warn ye that I've spent thirty-five years gettin' this tavern into my keepin', an' it'll take forty more to get it out again.' I jist let him have it straight, an' then I wint in an' slammed the door to show me contempt fer the loikes o' him.

"Then, a few days afterwards, two gentlemen called on me, an' they said they wanted to make a proposition to me, but I just told them to see me lawyers about it, an' they sort o' fidgitted awhile, an' then they asked me who I was employin' to look after my interests. I just bid them go and find out if they thought it worth while, an' I left them sittin' there like two bad boys in school." Nancy stopped while she laughed again, and young John broke in with a question.

"Was my father one of those two men?"

"Now, Johnny, ye needn't be mixin' yer father in the talk at all. Ye know he an' I never agreed," Nancy demurred.

"But I want to know for a reason," he persisted. "You have a payment—the last, I believe—on the mortgage falling due shortly?" he inquired.

"I have," she answered, somewhat perplexed.

"Well, my father would like you to miss making that payment, because he wants to get a commission for securing the sale of your property, and that would give him a hold on you. I can appreciate your desire to stay with the old place, so I would

advise you to be early in sending him this amount. Can you raise it?" young John asked.

Nancy sat for awhile in mental perturbation, and then somewhat dubiously answered, "Yes."

"Oh, that just reminds me that Corney bade me give you a hundred dollars," young John said, hurriedly, his face lighting up.

"Now, John, it's yer wish to help me that's makin' ye talk nonsense," Nancy put in, but young John did not heed her.

"You will take the money?" he asked, pleadingly.

Nancy gazed back at her old ramshackle hotel, and then her eyes rested softly on young John's face.

"You made me promise once, now it's your turn," he continued.

"Ye're not deceivin' me, John?" she said, hesitatingly.

"It's from Corney, sure," he affirmed, handing her the roll of bills.

"It's in me will fer Corney an' the girls, an' it's all I have to leave them. I couldn't give it up," she said, brokenly, as she took the money.

"Faith, it's dinner time, an' I'm sittin' out a-gossipin' when I should be at work," she announced, springing up. "Ye'll stay fer dinner, surely?" she asked of young John.

"I will with pleasure, Nancy," he assented.

Miss Sophia Piper dropped into the tavern during the afternoon. She could not help it, for she was full of news, and her aversion to the premises

was fast drifting from her. In her heart she loved the strange old woman with the kindly eyes and rugged manner. Her talk was all of young John Keene's return, and she confided with happy tears stealing down her cheeks that his marriage with Miss Trevor would take place the following week.

"The wedding will take place at our house, and I'm here especially to ask you to come," she added.

"And what would ye be thinkin' o' me, without fittin' clothes, a-mixin' wi' all yer foine folk?" Nancy asked.

"You are my friend, Mrs. McVeigh, and your dress will not alter that. Promise you'll come."

"Well, it's more than loikely I will," Nancy assented. "I'm thinkin' o' givin' up the bar and livin' quiet loike fer the rest o' me days," she remarked, reflectively.

Sophia Piper's heart gave a bound of delight, and she seized Nancy's hands in both of hers.

"I'm so glad to hear you say it," she burst out, and then she added, seriously, "Can you afford it?"

"Ye see," Nancy explained, "I've had a letter from my son Corney, an' he says he is goin' to make me a steady allowance. Anyhow, I'm tired o' the noise o' drunken men and the accusin' glances o' the good folk that passes. I've decided that it's not a fittin' occupation fer the mother o' the future mayor o' Chicago to be sellin' the stuff. Others want the license, an' they can have it. I used to like the servin' o' the public, but somehow me mind has been changed o' late," she sighed.

When young John Keene and Miss Mary Trevor were made a happy unit the next week, Nancy was there with a new silk dress, which she and Katie Duncan had worked long into the previous nights to finish. Her sweet old face was radiant with smiles, and when it was all over, and she had a chance to speak alone to Sophia Piper, she whispered:

"I'm celebratin' doubly, ye see, miss; I've just sold me stock o' spirits to the summer hotel people and had a big sign put over the bar door marked 'Privit.'"

"God bless you, Nancy McVeigh," Sophia Piper whispered back.

CHAPTER VII.

THE STRENGTH OF TEN.

It was the sudden termination of the jingling of sleigh-bells that caused Nancy McVeigh to look curiously from her window. People seldom stopped before the old tavern since the transfer of the license to the summer hotel back on the lake shore. At one time it was an odd thing for anyone to pass without dropping in, if only for a chat or an excuse to water his horses at the pump trough. Nancy sighed when she remembered it, for it had brought much gossip and change into her daily existence. When a chance visitor did intrude upon her quietude, his welcome was assured. Also she did much of her knitting by the front window, so that she could catch glimpses of her old customers, even if she could not speak to them.

On this wintry day in the early January, it was Dr. Dodona, from town, who tied his horse to a verandah post and rapped briskly at her door.

"It's a real pleasure to see ye, doctor," Nancy exclaimed, as she gave him admittance. "Ye must be cold. I'll just give ye me best chair by the fire, an' ye can smoke a pipe while ye're tellin' yer errand."

"You're very kind, Mistress McVeigh. People like yourself make a doctor's work less arduous," the doctor answered, heartily.

"It's good of ye to say so, doctor, fer it's little demand fer service ye get out o' me an' mine."

"I'm on my return from James Piper's, down the road. His two children are ill with the cold, and I am afraid something more serious may be expected. Miss Sophia has them well in hand, and I have left a course of treatment, but I'm not at all satisfied."

"Did ye recommend goose grease and turpentine? The winter Jennie had a bad throat I used them in plenty, an' it's what saved her," Nancy remarked, sagaciously.

"Well, not exactly those remedies, but they are very good," the doctor admitted, laughing. "Miss Sophia bade me tell you about the children, as you were expecting her to call some day this week," he continued.

Nancy nodded her head understandingly. "An' what d'ye expect will develop from their colds?"

"You needn't be frightened, Mistress McVeigh, as your children are all grown up. The boy Willie has a very weak throat, and it was terribly inflamed to-day. I am quite worried about it."

"It's bad news ye're bringing to-day, doctor, but niver expect trouble. Maybe they'll change fer the better before mornin'. Ye'll have some tea?" she asked suddenly.

"It's putting you to a lot of trouble," the doctor

said, reluctantly, but Nancy was gone before he had finished his sentence.

When the doctor was ready to depart, she asked, anxiously, "Ye'll let me know how they are to-morrow?"

"Most assuredly," the doctor called from the verandah.

Two or three days followed, and each brought Dr. Dodona to Nancy's door with a brief message as to the condition of his patients. His visits were very short, however, but he remained longer at the Piper household, and Nancy missed the smile from his face. She discussed the trend of affairs with Katie Duncan, who was her only confidant now that Will Devitt had gone out West because Nancy McVeigh's bar no longer needed his services, and she was somewhat pessimistic in her remarks. A week went over, and they only saw Dr. Dodona as his big sorrel mare drew his cutter over the Monk Road in a whirl of snow. Then one day he passed, accompanied by James Piper, and Nancy could endure the suspense no longer.

"We'll just have an early supper, an' I'll go over an' ask at the house," she said, decisively, to Katie Duncan. But a heavy rap at the door disturbed them at their meal. Nancy hastened to answer the summons, for she knew it was the doctor.

"I regret my not keeping to my word, Mistress McVeigh, but I am travelling fast these days. I have a lot of sick people to attend to, and the Pipers are in very bad shape."

Nancy's eyes bespoke her sympathy as he continued: "Willie Piper has diphtheria. Little Annie has it also, and to-day Miss Sophia has broken down. I'm afraid she is in for it, too."

"Fer land sakes, ye don't say so!" Nancy exclaimed, more to punctuate his words, so that she could digest their import thoroughly.

"They've got to have a nurse, and at the present moment I don't know where such a person can be secured," the doctor declared, desperately.

"An' have ye fergotten the blarney ye gave me the night o' the accident?" Nancy inquired, in a hurt tone.

"You don't mean you will go?" he asked, his face lighting up suddenly.

"An' why not? Faith, an' I'm fair sick meself stayin' about the house doin' nothin' but keepin' comfortable; an' my experience with Jennie will help me. Old Mrs. Conors is at the p'int of starvation since her husband died, an' I've been thinkin' o' takin' her in fer company. I'll just send Katie over the night to tell her to come in the mornin', so that the child won't be alone."

"I knew that you would help me out of this difficulty, Mistress McVeigh. I don't want anything to happen to Miss Sophia, she is such a great friend of mine."

Nancy was about to speak, then checked herself and looked at him keenly. "The wonders o' the world are no dead yit," she ejaculated, under her breath.

"I took the liberty of mentioning your name to James Piper before I came here to-day, and he will see that you are well paid for your work," the doctor added, hurriedly, guessing what was passing in the mind of the old woman.

"Ye can just tell James Piper I'll have none o' his money. The very impudence o' him to offer it! It's to help the children and Miss Sophia, an' not fer any consideration o' that sour-faced dragon, that I go," Nancy flung back her reply in a somewhat scornful manner.

"I'll go now, but will see you there in the morning," Doctor Dodona called, as he hastened away.

"So that's how the wind blows," Nancy muttered, thoughtfully, as she watched him depart; then she laughed softly in spite of the bad news.

Mrs. Conors, growing very feeble, was garrulously comfortable before the fire in Nancy McVeigh's kitchen. She was in a happy frame of mind, as her worldly anxieties were now very much a dream of the past. Nancy herself, with her strong, resolute face, her kindly eyes and tall gaunt frame, enrobed in a plain, home-made black dress, was setting things to rights in the home of James Piper. Her coming brought order, and a fearless performance of the doctor's commands. She was a herald of fresh hope, and carried into the gloomy house her sense of restful security. Her sixty-five years of life, a portion of which was spent as proprietress of a tavern, wherein the worst element of a rough countryside disported itself, had given her nerves of

steel, and yet the chords to her heart were tuned to the finest feelings of sympathy. Sophia Piper felt the glow of her presence as she lay tossing and moaning in the first grips of the malady. The children cried less frequently, and Willie's temperature lowered two points by the doctor's thermometer after the first day's service of the new nurse. And yet Nancy only went about doing the doctor's wishes and whispering to each in her motherly way. Her confidence in herself seemed to exert a pleasing influence with the sick ones, and then she was so strong. The hours of night found her wakeful to the slightest noise, yet patient with their fretful humors, and in the morning she came to them as fresh as a new flower in spring.

Doctor Dodona noticed the change, and marvelled. He came morning and evening, and each time sat a long while by Miss Sophia's bedside. He was wondering why he had never guessed something long before, and he did not suspect that Nancy read him like an open book. He had known Sophia for years, had gone to the same school with her, had worked by her side on committees of the charitable and religious organizations of the county, and here he was on the verge of confirmed bachelorhood and only learning the rudiments of love.

"His heart's fair breakin' fer her," was Nancy's muttered comment.

Then came the long night's fight for the life of Annie, the little daughter of James Piper. A struggle where only two could join, the doctor and

the Widow McVeigh, as the infectious nature of the disease forbade any assistance from without. Annie's illness had taken a very serious turn just as the doctor arrived on his evening call. He studied her case for a long ten minutes, and then he remarked to Nancy, "It is the crisis." Nancy smiled, not that his words amused her, but rather as an expression of her confidence in her powers to hold the spark of life in the little body. From then until early dawn they watched her, the life flickering like a spent torch in the wind. The doctor had taken extreme measures to combat the disease, and his greatest fear was that his efforts to cure might have a contrary effect by reason of the frailty of the child. Once he despaired, but, looking up, caught a momentary glint of steel in Nancy's eyes. His very fear that she might detect his weakness compelled him to continue. For ten hours she sat with the child on a pillow in her lap, apparently impassive, yet conscious of the slightest change in the hot, gasping breathing. Occasionally the doctor arose and passed into the room where the others lay, to see that they were not suffering through lack of attention. Returning from one of these silent visits, just as the sun shot its first shafts of light under the window blind, he noted a change in the little maid.

"She'll live," he declared.

"I've not been doubtin' the fact at all, at all," Nancy responded, bravely trying to cover her weariness.

From that night both children began to mend rapidly, and more time was left for the care of the elder patient. The case of Miss Sophia was somewhat different. Her age made it a much more difficult problem to unseat the poison from her system. It had committed sad ravages with her constitution before she had given in, and though Dr. Dodona felt reasonably certain that he could check the trouble, yet it seemed doubtful if her strength would sustain the fight.

As the days passed he could see plainly that she was unimproved. His professional training told him that, and he threw into the work all the skill that he possessed. He suddenly became conscious that he had lost some of the assurance in himself which had been the backbone of his former successes, but it took him a short while to comprehend fully his own incapacity. As he drove over the miles of snowy road into town, after an evening at her bedside, the truth became a conviction in his mind. His heart was too deeply concerned, and it had shattered his nerves.

He wired to the city for a specialist before going to his home. Next morning he told Nancy McVeigh of his action. That good old soul fell in with the idea on the spot, and her comments caused him to turn away his face in foolish embarrassment.

"It's what I have been expectin' ye to do all along, but I didn't care to suggest it to ye before, as yer professional pride might not welcome my

interference. It's her poor, thin face an' her smile that kapes yer mind from the rale doctorin'. Ye just git a smart man from the city, an' it'll do ye both a power o' good," she said.

When he was gone Nancy went to the sick-chamber.

"Are ye able to stand good news?" she inquired.

Miss Sophia turned her face towards her, and smiled encouragingly.

"Surely, if it is really bright and hopeful," she replied, weakly.

"Ye may suppose I'm takin' liberties wi' yer privit concerns, but ye will learn to fergive me whin ye are well an' the spring is here again wi' its quiet sunshine, its flowers an' the grass growin' by the roadside wi' patterns worked in dandelions like a foine carpet."

"I love the spring!" Miss Piper exclaimed, with animation.

It had seemed a wonderful thing to the doctor, the power to rouse the suffering woman contained in the homely phrases of Nancy McVeigh.

"As if that was all to love," Nancy impatiently returned. "Did it ever come right home to yer heart that ye loved a man an' ye didn't recognize the feelin' fer a long time afterwards. Fer instance, one who is makin' piles o' money out o' the ills o' others?" she added, pausing in her dusting to gaze shrewdly at her friend.

"It's all a riddle to me," Miss Sophia answered, although her words betrayed a rising interest.

"Aye, a foine riddle, to be sure, an' one that has its answer in the face of Doctor Dodona."

Sophia Piper's pallid face suddenly changed color, and she frowned irritably. Nancy sat down on the foot of the bed and took the sick woman's hand in her own long, hardened fingers.

"Ye must get well soon, dearie; the doctor's fair beside himself thinkin' he might lose ye, an' he can scarce compose himself long enough to mix his own medicines. He's a lonely man; can't ye see it, child?"

"Do you think so?" Miss Sophia whispered, wonderingly.

"It's not a matter o' thinkin', it's the rale truth, so it is. What is that rhyme I hear the young ones say, 'Somethin' borrowed, somethin' blue, somethin' old and somethin' new'? May I be somethin' old at yer weddin'?" Nancy asked, tenderly.

Miss Sophia drew the old woman's hand to her cheek and kissed it affectionately.

'Twas after the above conversation that Sophia Piper began to evince a determined desire to recover her health.

"Will the doctor be here this afternoon?" she asked.

"Ye couldn't kape him away. He's bringin' a friend wi' him, too," Nancy vouchsafed.

"Then you'll please tidy my hair, and have the curtains drawn back from the windows so that the sun can shine in the room," she ordered, sweetly.

"An' I'll put some fresh flowers on yer table," Nancy agreed.

The specialist came in the afternoon. He was a portly man, with iron-grey hair, clean-shaven face and a habit of emphasizing his remarks by beating time to them with his spectacles. He examined the patient thoroughly, whilst Dr. Dodona stood by deferentially, though impatiently, awaiting his opinion. Then they adjourned to another apartment, and the great man carefully diagnosed the case to his *confrère*. "She has been very ill," he admitted, summing up the loose ends of his notations, "but I see no necessity for a change in your remedies.

"Do you not see a recent improvement?" he asked, shortly.

Dr. Dodona shrugged his shoulders. "Since last night, yes."

"Continue as you have been doing. I will give you a few written suggestions as to diet and tonic," the specialist explained, and then he dropped his professional air and slapped his fellow-practitioner familiarly on the shoulder.

"You were afraid because you have lost your heart as well as your nerve. Is that a correct diagnosis?" he asked jovially.

"Evidently you have diagnosed symptoms in the wrong party," Dr. Dodona answered, drily.

"You had better settle it while I am here," advised the city medical man, who showed much aptitude for other things than cases of perverse illness.

"By Jove, I will!" the doctor burst out, and in

he went with a rash disregard of the noise he was making. He did not heed the warning "Sh-h!" of the widow McVeigh, so engrossed was he in his mission.

Sophia Piper's face lit up with a glad welcome, and she held her hands towards her lover in perfect understanding.

"Hivin bless them! In all me experience I have niver met with such a love-sick pair before. They're old enough to be more discreet," Nancy observed to the specialist, who chatted with her whilst the two were settling their future happiness.

"And you are a judge of human nature, too?" put in the learned man, admiringly.

"The older we git the wiser we grow, sometimes," was Nancy's retort.

CHAPTER VIII.

A DESERTER FROM THE MONK ROAD.

Father Doyle had just stepped from the white heat of an August day on the Monk Road into the modest parlor of the widow McVeigh. He was growing very stout as his years advanced upon him, and trudging through the dust was warm exercise. But the sultriness without made the cool interior of the tavern (for such the people still called the old place, although Mrs. McVeigh no longer extended hospitality to the public) more appreciable. Wild pea vines clambered over the windows, and the ancient copings protruded outwards far enough to cast a shade, so that the breeze which entered was freshened and sweetened with a gentle aroma of many-colored blossoms.

Nancy McVeigh was unburdening a whole week's gossip whilst the priest helped himself generously to the jug of buttermilk which she had brought in from her churning.

"I have seen wonderful changes on the Monk Road in my time," he said, reflectively, in answer to Nancy's observations concerning the summer hotel on the Point, now filled to overflowing with people seeking health and pleasure in its picturesque surroundings.

"One would scarcely know the place. What with grand rigs full o' chatterin' women and children a-drivin' past the door, and the whole Point a picture o' lawns an' pretty dresses," sighed Nancy. "But it does me heart good to see the brown on the cheeks o' the little 'uns after they've been here awhile."

"Doubtless you find some trade with them?" the priest surmised.

"Considerable; first in the mornin' it's someone askin' if I have fresh eggs, then it's milk or butter or home-made bread, and so it keeps agoin' all day long. I'm no needin' much o' their money, now that Corney sends me my allowance once a month as regular as the sun, but I've still quite a family to support, so I just charge 'em enough to make them appreciate what they're gettin'. I've got Mrs. Conors an' old Donald still on me hands, an' Katie Duncan's at an age whin she wants a little spendin' fer ribbons and fancy things. So many foine people about just pricks the envy o' the child, an' I wouldn't, fer the sake o' a dollar or two, have her ashamed o' her position. It's different from the old days, as ye say, Father Doyle."

"It is that, sure enough," he agreed.

"I'm thinkin' o' takin' a trip," she remarked, with an air of mystery.

"And where are you going?" he asked, in surprise.

"To Chicago," she vouchsafed, proudly.

"Is that not rather far for your old bones?" he inquired, with a merry twinkle.

"Ye're fergittin', Father Doyle, that I'm only as ould as I feel, an' that's not beyond a bit o' pleasure an' the sight o' my boy. It's such a time since I've seen the lad that I'm most afeared I'll not be knowin' me own son."

"Tut, tut! You don't think that. I'd know a McVeigh anywhere if I met him," the priest expostulated.

"I've been savin' me odd change these two or three years, an' I've plinty to pay me way comfortably. I'm wonderin', though, how the ould place would git on without me!" Nancy remarked, dubiously.

"Never suffer in the least," the priest affirmed.

"Ye may think so, but whin I've been here day in an' day out since me hair was as fair as Katie Duncan's, ye can understand it takes a deal o' courage fer me to trust to others," she retorted.

The priest nodded his head slowly in acquiescence.

Two weeks of laborious calculations and preparations preceded the day set for Nancy's departure, and during the interval her many friends discussed the journey so fully with her that her mind was a maze of conflicting doubts. But her contumacious nature did not permit a retreat from her decision, and to make it utterly impossible she went over to the new station and gave over forty-eight dollars for a ticket. It seemed a reckless expenditure, but a peep every night at the photographs on the wall

of her room drove the mercenary aspect of it from her and left her firmly resolved and intensely happy.

The fateful hour came at last, and quite a gathering of familiar faces was at the station to see her depart. Father Doyle, Mrs. Jim Bennet and family, Katie Duncan, Mrs. Conors, old Donald, Dr. Dodona and wife, the two Piper children and a host of others saw that she was comfortably established in the big car, much to the evident amusement of the loitering tourists. She must have kissed at least twenty people before the conductor came briskly on the scene and sent them pell-mell on to the platform. The whistle shrieked and the train glided slowly away. Nancy, a strange figure, with widow's bonnet, bright colored shawl and face wreathed in smiles, leaned far out of the window, waving an answer to the shouted farewells.

Mistress McVeigh spent a major portion of the evening in getting acquainted with her environments. Her previous ride in the cars had been her honeymoon, but that was so long ago that she had forgotten even the sensation. Its novelty now intruded on her peace of mind, and she enjoyed it, although it was tiring. She sat gazing about in silent contemplation until the lamps had been lighted and the negro porter was shouting his evening dinner call. His words reminded her that she had a basket of good things, so she took off her bonnet, spread her shawl on the adjacent seat and proceeded to lay out the contents. Most of the people in the coach were going forward to the

diner, but such extravagance did not appeal to her. But she did notice that a very delicately featured lady, with a small baby and a boy of two or three, was endeavoring with patient though apparently ineffectual effort to satisfy the fretful wants of her little ones. The worried flush in the young mother's cheek, and the trembling of her lips, roused Nancy's compassionate nature, and, although she would not have confessed it, she was lonesome. To be amongst people unspoken to and unnoticed was a revelation that had never existed in her tiny world. She watched the struggling woman covertly for a short time, while she nibbled at her lunch, and then she could bear it no longer, so she stepped across the aisle.

"If ye please, ma'am, I'll take the baby fer a spell, while ye give the boy his supper," she volunteered.

The lady shot a grateful glance at the queer old body who had accosted her.

"If you don't mind the bother," she replied, sweetly.

"It's no bother, sure," Nancy declared, emphatically, and her eyes dwelt over-long on her new acquaintance. The lady reminded her of someone, then like a flash it came to her, and she looked again so persistently that the lady was embarrassed. It was Jennie's mother she remembered, the night she came, sick and broken, into the tavern, with her baby in her arms.

"The poor wee thing's fair excited," she mur-

"Ye can just pull down the cover, an' I'll do me own fixin'."

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mured, as she cuddled the tiny bundle against her breast.

"Won't you take tea with us?" the mother inquired, her face lighting up at the prospect.

"Ye must just help yerselves from my basket, then," Nancy protested, as she brought it over.

Mrs. Morris, for such was the lady's name, proved an excellent travelling companion. She was not only a splendid conversationalist, but also she knew how to procure warm tea from the porter. Soon she and Nancy were quite at ease with each other, Nancy contributing her share at the entertaining, with her homely gossip of the Monk Road and its people. The baby was her chief solace, however, and its mother only had it during the midnight hours, so constant a nurse was she. And the atom itself was tractable beyond its own mother's belief.

The process of making up the beds in the sleeper gave Nancy an unpleasant half-hour. She did not admire the masculine performances of the porter.

"It's no work for an ignorant black man," she informed Mrs. Morris, in a deprecatory tone. Then she spoke directly to the negro: "Ye can just pull down the cover, an' I'll do me own fixin'."

"Yes, mum," he answered, grinning, but he did not desist from his duties.

"He's one of thim furriners, who don't know what ye're sayin', I suppose," she observed, resignedly.

When the conductor made his last round of the

cars, before the lamps were extinguished, Nancy stopped him and questioned anxiously, "Ye'll be sure to waken me at Chicago?"

"Why, ma'am, we won't arrive there until tomorrow evening," he answered.

"So ye say, but I'm strange to the run o' trains, an' I don't want to be goin' miles past the place and niver know it," she objected.

"Never fear, missus, you'll be looked after properly," he said, consolingly.

The night and day journey to Chicago was so full of pleasant happenings that Nancy could scarcely realize it was almost over. With the Morris baby asleep in her arms, she would gaze from the window at the panorama of country drifting past, interested in its strangeness only in a superficial sort of way, while her inmost thoughts pictured the great city to which she was going, and wherein she expected her son to be the most predominant figure. Each hour seemed to be bringing him closer to her, and a mild yearning centred about her heart. Occasionally a twinge of apprehension would mar her tranquillity. She wondered if he would know her, and if he had received the postcard which she had written with so much care a week previous. She was too conscious of her happiness to let such thoughts disturb her for long, and then Mrs. Morris lived in Chicago and had promised to watch over her welfare until she was safe in Corney's keeping.

The gradual increase in houses clustered into

villages along the way warned her of the near approach to her destination.

"I hope I may see more of ye," she observed to Mrs. Morris, after a long silence of reflection.

"It's a big city, and you will be very busy," the little lady explained. "But I shall never forget your kindness to me. I should have been very lonely and tired if you hadn't made friends," she continued.

"It's been a God's blessin', the knowin' o' ye an' the kiddies," Nancy assured her.

This simple-minded old body had made a deep inroad into the city mother's affections, and her joy at the early prospect of meeting her husband was tempered with a sincere sadness at the parting which it would entail.

The evening was growing quickly into darkness as they sped along, and an unusual bustle amongst the other passengers had commenced. Now that the hugeness of the outlying districts of Chicago were being unfolded to Nancy with the long lines of lighted street, and starry streaks of electric cars flashing by like meteors in a southern sky, she became aware of a keen sense of fear. It was all so different from anything in her past experience. It seemed as if she had broken ties with everything familiar except the sweet face of her companion and the two sleeping children. The roar of the city had now enveloped the train, and presently it began to slacken speed, as it had done a score of times before in the last hour. The conductor came

into the car, calling out, "Chicago!" and Nancy's heart beat so that it almost choked her. The bright glare of the station came down into their window from the roofs of adjacent trains, and then, before she rightly understood what was happening, she was out on to the platform with her arms full of her own and Mrs. Morris' bundles. A short man detached himself from a crowd that waited without the gates far in front, and came dashing towards them.

"It is my husband," Mrs. Morris whispered, breathlessly. Next moment she was locked in his arms. Nancy gazed furtively about, peering at the faces, and hoping that one might be her son. After a long scrutiny, she turned a despairing, helpless face to her late travelling companion. Mrs. Morris understood, and came to her rescue quickly.

"You are a stranger in this big city, so you had better come home with us for to-night," she suggested.

"I wrote him to be waitin' fer me, but he must have fergotten," Nancy returned, brokenly.

"Yes, you must come, Mrs.—" Mr. Morris began, then hesitated.

"Mrs. McVeigh, from the Monk Road," his wife told him, with a happy smile.

"The Monk Road, where is that, pray?" Mr. Morris asked, in puzzled tones.

"D'ye not know that?" Nancy exclaimed, incredulously.

The man shook his head.

She considered awhile, then made a gesture of utter helplessness. She knew no adequate description of the geographical position of her home. It was just the Monk Road, running from an indefinite somewhere to an equally mysterious ending, and anyone who did not know that was lacking in their education. They threaded their way through the press of people to the narrow street, and entered a cab. Then, while the husband and wife talked in subdued tones, Nancy listened to the babel of clanging gongs and footsteps of many people on the pavements over which they were passing. She suddenly bethought herself of questioning Mr. Morris as to his knowledge of her son Cornelius. His answer was as perplexing as everything else she had encountered in that strange new world. He had never heard of him. Fortunately she had a business card of her son's firm, and after much cogitation Mr. Morris decided that he could find the establishment in the morning.

Nancy secured a much-needed night's rest at the home of the Morris family, and was up and had the kettle boiling on the range before the appearance of the household.

"I'd no enjoy the day at all if I wasn't doin' somethin' o' the sort! An' ye're tired," she responded to Mr. Morris' surprised ejaculation. She had to curb her anxiety to be off until after the noon hour, and then, with a promise to return, if her plans miscarried, she was piloted aboard the Overhead by Mr. Morris.

"I'll drop you off in front of the block in which your son's offices are situated," he informed her by the way. The run through the city was perhaps a distance of four miles, and while Nancy gazed in open-mouthed wonder, the little man pointed out to her the places of note along the route.

"It's all just wonderful," was the text of her replies.

They drew up at a little station, and from it descended to the pavement, and at a great door in a block that made her neck ache to see its top, he left her, with a list of directions that only served to shatter the remnant of location which her mind contained. She looked uncertainly about her until her eyes rested on the sign, "Beware of Pickpockets!" then she clutched her old leathern wallet, and with frightened glances hurried inside. But here a second labyrinth opened to her. A glass door led into a very spacious apartment, where a number of men were counting money in little iron cages. She boldly marched in and asked the nearest one, "Please, sir, is this Cornelius McVeigh's office?" The man addressed stopped his counting and scowled at her, but something in her wrinkled, serious face caused him to relent of his churlishness.

"A moment, ma'am," he replied.

Next instant he was by her side, and very gallantly led her to the outer hall and over to the elevator man. That Mecca of information scratched

his head before venturing to assist them, then he hazarded, briskly, "Fifth floor, No. 682."

"If that's wrong, come back," the young man said, kindly, as he left her.

The elevator drew her up almost before she could catch her breath, and landed her on the fifth floor. The man pointed along a hallway, and she followed this until a name in big gilt letters arrested her attention and caused her heart to flutter spasmodically. "Cornelius McVeigh—Investments," it read. And this was really her son's Eldorado! A mist crept over her eyes as she turned the brass knob and entered. A score of young men and women were before her, busily engaged at desks, writing and sorting over papers. Beyond them, other doors led to inner offices, and from some invisible quarter a peculiar clicking cast a disturbing influence. Whilst she was taking it in, in great sweeping glances, a small boy stepped saucily up and demanded her wishes.

"I'm Mistress McVeigh, o' the Monk Road, an' I've come to see Cornelius," she told him.

The boy looked at her, whistled over his shoulder and grimaced.

"What yer givin' us, missus?" he asked.

"I'll have ye understand I'll take no impudence," she retorted, wrathfully, shaking her parasol handle at him.

"If yer wants the boss, he's out," he informed her, with more civility.

"Is there anything I can do?" a young lady asked, coming over to her from her desk.

"It's just Mister McVeigh that I want to see. I'm his mother," Nancy replied, simply.

"You are his mother!" the girl exclaimed, doubtfully.

"That I am," Nancy declared, emphatically.

"Mr. McVeigh is out of the city, but Mr. Keene is here. Will he do?" she again questioned.

At this juncture someone stepped briskly from an inner room, and then a man dashed impetuously across the general office, scattering books and clerks in his eagerness, and crying, "Why, it's Mrs. McVeigh!" as he caught her gaunt body in his arms.

"Johnny, me lad, is it yerself?" she gasped, after he had desisted from his attempts to smother her.

Young John Keene held Nancy's hand within his own whilst he showed her everything of interest in the office, for the mother loved it all because it was her son's. The clerks were courteous and attentive, and the girls fell in love with the quaint old lady on the spot.

"It's fer all the world like a school," she murmured in young John's ear.

"And I'm the big boy," he answered, laughing.

A telegram searched the far corners of Mexico that afternoon, and at an unheard-of place, with an unpronounceable name, it found Cornelius McVeigh, the centre of a group of gentlemen. The party had just emerged from the yawning mouth of a mine,

and were resting in the sunshine and expelling the foul air from their lungs, whilst the young promoter of the western metropolis was explaining, from a sheet of paper covered with figures, the cost of base metal to the producer. The mine foreman suddenly interrupted his remarks with a yellow envelope, which he thrust respectfully forward. "A telegram, sir," he said, and withdrew. The array of men sighed gratefully at the respite, and Cornelius McVeigh hastily scanned the message.

"Your mother in Chicago, much disappointed at your absence. When may we expect you?" so it read.

The young man folded it carefully, put it into his pocket and continued his discourse, but his words were losing their pointedness, and he was occasionally absent-minded.

"It's dinner-time. I move an adjournment to the hotel," one of the grey-haired capitalists suggested, and, with scant dignity for men of such giant interests, they hurried to take advantage of the break in the negotiations. Cornelius McVeigh did not go in to lunch, but strolled the length of the verandah for a full hour, absorbed in thought, then with characteristic energy he hastened to the little telegraph room and wrote a reply to his home office:

"Will close a great deal if I stay. Cannot leave for a week at least. Persuade mother to wait."

He then walked to the smoking apartments, where his late associates were trying to forget business.

"I am ready, gentlemen," he observed, in his crisp, convincing manner of speech.

Young John Keene handed the message to the Widow McVeigh. He knew it would hurt, and his arm stole about her shoulders as it did when he was the scamp of the Monk Road gossip.

"I'm tired o' this great noisy city," she faltered, after she had studied the message a long time. "I'm no feelin' meself at all, at all, an' my head hurts. I must be goin' home."

"You shall stay with me, Nancy. Corney will be back in ten days at the least. My wife wishes it, as well as myself, and we want you to see our little Nancy. That's our baby," he said, in lower tones.

Nancy gazed at the hurrying people on the hot pavements below, at the buildings that shot upwards past her line of vision, at the countless windows and tangled wires; then she turned to young John and he knew that she had seen none of them.

"I'll try, Johnny," she answered.

The days that followed were battles with weariness to Nancy McVeigh. She did not complain, but her silence only aggravated the loneliness which had crept into her soul. Young John Keene talked to her, amused her, cajoled her, pleaded with her, and yet her mood was impenetrable. Even tiny Nancy Keene's dimpled fingers could not take away the strange unrest in her eyes. Then, when the ten days had elapsed, a second message came: "Kiss mother and tell her to wait. Can't return for another week. Am writing." Nancy read it and

cried; not weakly, like a woman, but with harsh, dry sobs.

"I'll be goin' home in the mornin'," she said, firmly.

The train took her away in the damp, sunless early hours, when the city was just awakening.

"She's crazed with homesickness," young John's wife confided to her husband, in a hushed, sad voice.

The way home was long, and Nancy chafed at the slowness of the express. So long as it was light she watched from the car window, and not till the pleasant quiet of the vicinity of Monk Road was reached did the gloom-cloud rise from her face. Her heart seemed to beat free once more, and her eyes were full of tears, but they were tears of happiness. She left the train at Monk, and the first person to greet her was Father Doyle, who by chance was at the station. He read a tale of disappointment in his old friend's appearance, and he remarked, sympathetically, "You are looking thin and tired, Mistress McVeigh."

"It's a weary day, sure enough," she admitted. The two walked side by side, the stout priest carrying her heaviest travelling bags, until they came to the road which the summer hotel management had built in a direct line from the station to their gate, and here Nancy stopped abruptly.

"Well, if the old tavern isn't right over there, just as I left it," she ejaculated, and a smile broke over her countenance the like of which it had not known for days past.

CHAPTER IX.

THE KERRY DANCERS.

NANCY MCVEIGH treasured her disappointment over the visit to Chicago for many months, but only Katie Duncan and those who saw her daily knew of it. She was not the strong, self-reliant Nancy whom people had so long associated with the ramshackle inn of Monk Road. But her smile grew sweeter and her sympathies ran riot on every side where little troubles beset her less fortunate neighbors. Her mind turned oftener to the church which stood on the side-road, beyond the home of Father Doyle, and her influence for a better life was remarkable with the younger generation. The stormy period of her own existence was past, and like a silvery rivulet twinkling in the sun at the mountain crest, speeding downward until it roars and foams in an angry cataract, then emerging into the cool, placid stream, lazily flowing past the village cottages and on through the silent woodland, she had reached a stage where only goodness and friendship mattered.

Her great neighbor, the summer hotel proprietor, was perhaps the solitary person who did not under-

stand her. In vain he waited patiently, as the seasons opened and closed, for her to accede to his importunities to sell her property. There the old inn stood, a blot within the terraced grounds and clean-cut park, unsightly to his eyes, and the humorous butt of his patrons. But Nancy had made her plans when the new order of things was first suggested, and she turned her rugged face to the sandy Monk Road and held her peace.

Cornelius, her son, had written her often and voluminously since her trip southwards. He had also made a definite promise that he would come home the very next summer. 'Twas this that brightened her eyes and put a lightness into her step. It also provided a subject of constant conversation between herself and Katie Duncan. Together they would count out the months and weeks and days to the time when he should arrive.

"The lad's worried, so he is, an' he wants to see his ould mother, in spoite o' his foine clothes an' his dealin's," she repeated, during those happy confidences.

Although Nancy had abandoned the public service, yet hers was no humdrum existence. She still had duties to perform which occupied her thoughts from daylight to dusk. She frequently visited the Dodonas, who lived in the big Piper house. And the Piper children played about her front door, much as her own son and Johnny Keene had done so many years before. Other children, too, found the vicinity of the widow McVeigh's

a very tempting resort, and their parents were well satisfied, for they had learned to love and respect the white-haired woman who chose to be their guardian.

"I'll niver get enough o' the dears," she would say to the mothers, and they quite believed her.

In the winter of the following year Will Devitt came home from the North-West. He had been absent three years, and during that time had secured a grant of land. He boasted of his possessions to his foster-mother, and she was almost as proud of them as he was himself.

"It's a grand country, sure, this Canada of ours, an' were I younger I'd go back wi' ye, Will. D'ye think we could find business fer a tavern?" she asked him one day.

"You would just make your fortune," Will responded, enthusiastically.

Nancy smiled and shook her head.

"I'm only talkin' like a silly ould woman, laddie. In the first place, I'm no fit to run a tavern, an' in the second, it's no fittin' occupation fer the loikes o' me."

Will had been home a short while when Nancy's suspicions were aroused, and being unable to lay them bare to Katie Duncan, she told them to Mrs. Doctor Dodona.

"There's somethin' mysterious in the behavior o' the young folk," she confided. "I'm uncommon versed in the language of sighs an' tender looks, an' it's comin' to somethin' before long."

"You don't mean that Will Devitt is in love?" the doctor's wife asked, in mild surprise.

"I'm afeard it's just that," Nancy admitted, regretfully.

"And with whom, pray?"

Nancy bent forward and whispered in her ear.

"Your Katie!" Sophia Dodona exclaimed.

Nancy nodded, and they both laughed.

Nancy knew instinctively that her two foster-children had something they wished to say to her, and she purposely kept them at arm's length, whilst she enjoyed their discomfiture.

"It's rare fun," she told Sophia.

Will Devitt was becoming desperate, for he must soon get himself back to his prairie farm. So, after a lengthy twilight consultation with his heart's desire, he came tramping awkwardly into the presence of the widow McVeigh.

"Ye're lookin' serious the night," she greeted, as she paused with her knitting.

"I'm feeling that way, too," he conceded, sighing.

"Maybe ye're thinkin' o' the closeness o' yer leavin'?" she questioned.

"It's partly that," he admitted, sheepishly.

"Only partly, ye say. Fer shame, to let anythin' else be a part o' such thoughts," she observed, somewhat severely.

"Now, granny, it is no use you being cross with me. I'm full of love for you and the old place, and you know it," he expostulated. "There's

something else, all the same," he continued, with a forlorn pleading in his voice.

"Then ye had better out wi' it, lad," she replied, giving him her whole attention.

"It's about our Kate," he commenced.

"I thought as much. Ye go away an' get a plot o' land somewhere, an' a bit o' a cabin, an' then ye come back pretendin' it was yer love fer yer poor granny. But ye had other plans, which ye wouldn't tell till ye were driven to it," Nancy interrupted, with a strange lack of sympathy.

Her words aroused Will's latent passion, and drove him to a confession, regardless of consequences.

"Katie an' I have been lovin' each other fer years, in fact, ever since we were children. We made it up then that we should marry some day. When I went West it was to earn enough money to buy a home fer us. I've got a farm now, an' I can keep her. We've talked it over every night fer a month, an' she's willin' to go if ye will give yer consent," he burst out, earnestly.

Mistress McVeigh listened in silence, rocking her chair to and fro. As the night became darker only her outline was visible to the youth, who poured into her ears his love story with an unfettered tongue. He talked rapidly of his plans, his chances and his faith in his ability to maintain Katie Duncan as comfortably as she had been at the tavern. When he had finished, Nancy called sharply to Katie, whom she rightly guessed was not

far away, to fetch a lamp. Katie obeyed with commendable alacrity, and deposited it on the table. She had never seemed so grown-up and pretty to her foster-parent as she did at that moment.

"Katie," began Nancy, with ominous slowness, "Will has been tellin' me that ye have been courtin' under me very nose. Do ye love him truly, lass?"

"Yes, granny," the girl answered, almost defiantly.

"God bless ye, children. The sooner ye're married, then, the better," Nancy exclaimed, and she drew them both to her and kissed them again and again.

It was a real old-fashioned country dance that followed the wedding of Katie Duncan and Will Devitt. The ceremony was performed by Father Doyle in the early morning, and all afternoon the preparations for the evening were being rushed to completion with tireless energy.

"Katie's the last o' my children, an' I'll give her a fittin' send-off," Nancy explained to Sophia Dodona, and her words were not idly spoken.

The doctor's wife was in the kitchen, superintending the baking. As a result, such an array of good things to eat had never before graced the modest board. The task of decorating was in the care of Will Devitt and his bride, and a gay dress they were putting on the interior of their old home. Flags were draped over the walls, evergreens fastened to cover the door and window-tops, and flowers from the Piper conservatory were placed wher-

ever space would permit. Nancy had no especial work, so she assumed the *rôle* of general advisor and final court of appeal. Such a concourse of guests had been invited that it was doubtful if the accommodation was sufficient. But, as Will Devitt suggested, they danced closer together nowadays, so that the room required would not be so much.

By eight o'clock the merry sleigh-bells were jingling over the Monk Road. Boys and girls, some older than the term would imply, were tumbling out of the robes in the glare of the big tin lamp, hung to the gable end, which Nancy had borrowed from the church gate. The fiddlers arrived early, and after a warm at the hall stove, began tuning up on the improvised platform at the end of the parlor. The floor manager, a tall young Irishman named O'Connell, raised his voice above the babel of talking and laughing, and proclaimed the opening number.

"Partners fer the Lancers!" he shouted.

A hush ensued, and Sophia Dodona and her staff came from the kitchen to see the start off.

"No, doctor, I'm too ould," Nancy was saying to Dr. Dodona, who wished to set the pace for the younger guests. But her words did not ring true, and amidst the hearty plaudits of the rest she took the doctor's arm. The others fell in line as if by magic, and then the fiddles began with vim. Oh, how they danced! Everyone, old and young—quadrilles, reels, polkas, Irish Washerwoman, Old Dan Tucker, and all. Even Mrs. Conors, after much

persuasion, did a jig as it was performed "whin I was a gal in ould Ireland," and Patrick Flynn, the aspiring County Member, was her partner. How the old tavern creaked and groaned with the unusual tax upon its timbers, and how bright the windows looked from every side of the rambling edifice! When midnight was past the tables were set in the bar-room of ancient times, and the cleverest productions of Sophia Dodona disappeared like snow before an April sun. As Dr. Dodona remarked afterwards to his wife, "'Twould be a round century of health to the bride and groom should the wishes of the feasters be realized."

When it was all over, and the last "Good-night" had passed the threshold, Nancy went to her room. She sat a long while, resting in her big rocking-chair and reflecting on the changes in the future which the day had meant for her. Her eyes gradually centred on her photographs of Cornelius, and her face immediately brightened.

"Heigho," she sighed, "it's no my religion to worry."

CHAPTER X.

THE HOME-COMING OF CORNELIUS McVEIGH.

Cornelius McVeigh sat in his private office, thinking. A telegram lay open before him on the desk, and its contents had all to do with the brown study into which he had fallen. Presently his senior clerk appeared in answer to a summons he had given a moment before.

"John, I'm going home for a holiday," he said.

Young John Keene's face brightened perceptibly at the announcement.

"It's the right thing to do, Corney, and the trip will do you a world of good," he replied, with a familiarity which business rules could not overcome.

"I must go at once. You see, I've a telegram. Perhaps you would care to read it," Cornelius McVeigh continued, moodily.

Young John took up the missive and read it aloud: "Come home at once. Mother seriously ill.—Dodona." He looked up to find his employer's eyes searching his face anxiously.

"You will go at once, Corney?" he said, quietly, but with a note of challenge.

"The train leaves at noon. Help me to pack up, John," the other answered.

The Tourist Express stopped at The Narrows for half an hour just at lunch time. The Narrows was a pretty place. The peninsula jutting from either way, separated only by a shallow strait, was spanned by the railroad bridge. The station formed a centre at one end to a thickly settled district of summer cottages, and quite close by stood two rather pretentious hotels. East and west the glistening surface of the lakes, dotted with islands, spread out like two great sheets of chased silver. Out beyond, the white trail of the sandy Monk Road zigzagged until it was lost in the trees. 'Twas a half-hour well spent to lounge about the platform and take in the grandeur of the landscape.

The usual crowd of gaily dressed humanity was waiting for the train, surging about it as the passengers alighted.

Cornelius McVeigh stepped from the parlor car and looked at his watch irritably. Thirty minutes seemed an age to his impatient mind, and the richly upholstered car was too confining for him to think properly. To the outward eye he was the Cornelius McVeigh of the city, tall, of military bearing and faultlessly attired, who gave his fellow-beings the privilege of calling at his office between the hours of ten and four each business day, that they might lay before his highly trained faculties their little monetary affairs, and also the fee which his wide reputation for successful manipulating could

demand. He moved only until he was free of the people, then paused whilst his gaze shifted from his late companions to the station and on to the dim, sunny, leafy country beyond. Disappointment lurked in the corners of his eyes and gradually spread over his entire countenance. Suddenly he realized that it was exceedingly warm on the unsheltered platform. He wished to think quietly, so he shifted his raincoat to his other arm and sought a shaded place against the railing. His mind was struggling in a vortex of ancient history, and this was the picture which arose from the strife. A very commonplace, bare-legged lad, with curly, uncombed hair and face so freckled that a few yards' distance merged them into one complete shade of reddish brown. He surveyed the neighboring bridge, and it came into his mental vision unconsciously. The long, lean girders he had once trod with the careless ease of a Blondin. Farther out, the rotting tops of the piles of the old foot-bridge had been his seat from which he caught the crafty pickerel. Beyond, the opening in the shore reeds marked the passage to the secret feeding-ground of the black bass. He remembered it perfectly. A fleeting sarcastic smile dwelt on his deeply-lined features as he watched a number of boats, filled with noisy, gesticulating campers, who fished in the open water where no fish lived. A small lad, certainly a native of the place, dressed in knee trousers and a shirt which let in the air in places, was holding high carnival with the nerves of the onlookers. He was per-

forming daring feats on the trestle-work of the bridge. Suddenly, accidentally, or maybe purposely, the expected catastrophe occurred, and he plunged head foremost into the running water twenty feet below. A chorus of feminine shrieks greeted the termination of his exploits, but his grinning face as he reappeared, treading water and rubbing his eyes, turned their consternation into laughter. Then, with a final howl of boyish delight, he struck out for the nearest pier.

Cornelius McVeigh awoke from his reverie as the express began to move. He swung aboard and proceeded to gather his baggage together. He had scarcely finished when the train slowed up at the end of his journey. He stepped out with a feeling of expectation. Home at last! The thought was predominant, and he let it sway him with a selfish disregard to other influences. Everything had changed during his twenty years of absence; and the strangeness broke in upon him as if in condemnation. Here again was the chattering, light-hearted throng, and their presence only added additional pangs. Not a familiar face to greet him. Even the fields and woodlands had a different aspect. All the success of the past decade, which had given wealth and a recognized place in the world of business, could not wipe out the impression of a youth of dreamy idleness and simplicity. Where he had hunted rabbits and slept under a tent of tattered carpet during the warm summer nights stood a gaudily-painted hotel, flanked with wide

verandahs and terraced lawns. And all about were people, in hammocks, on chairs or rustic seats, or wandering about enjoying the cool freshness of the lake breezes. He hurried along the wide newly-cut road which led from the station. At the high wire gate, erected so recently that the sods from the post-holes were yet green, he stopped. The successive changes of the place were so startling to him that he wished to contemplate them more slowly. It was an ideal spot and filled the soul with pleasurable anticipation. The children played on the grass, and the hotel employees sang as they dawdled by in pursuit of their duties. Everything bespoke luxury and ease. In the entrance doorway of the hotel stood a stout man, probably the proprietor. He was looking from under his hand in a speculative way at the stranger by his gate. Cornelius saw these things mechanically. Then, as his eyes passed from one point to another, his mother's tavern came within the circle of his vision. He looked no farther. There it stood, the oddest, drollest structure that ever marred so perfect a landscape. Its weather-beaten shingles curled to the sky. Its cracked chimneys and protruding gable leaned towards the roadway, and every board was rusted to a natural paintless hue. The pump stood apart, the trough green with moss and the handle pointing outwards threateningly, like a grim sentry guarding against the curious passers-by. A grove of trees generously shaded the rear porch, and beyond them, behind the high fence, he knew, was

the garden. The log barn, with its plastered chinks, had not altered a particle, and the cow might have been the same one he had milked, so like her she appeared as she munched at the trailing wisps of hay hanging from the loft. The outspoken cackle of hens also added to the rustic environments. It filled his heart with gladness to see the old place, but it was not complete. The quaintest figure of all was missing—his mother, tall and white-headed, standing on the verandah watching down the road for his return. Something was hanging to the soiled brass knob of the front door, and as he approached he saw that it was a streamer of black crêpe. His heart, which for twenty long years had thrilled only to the hard-won successes of a self-made man, beat with a sudden passionate fear, and a tear stole out upon his cheek. A new-born awkwardness grappled with him as he stumbled along the roadway. Somehow he saw a pair of dirty, sun-scorched feet encased in his shining leather shoes. The languid eyes of the hotel guests followed him, and some wondered as to the nature of his errand. Arriving at the door, he knocked lightly. An old woman, with dishevelled grey hair and shoulders enveloped in a bright homespun shawl, answered his summons and shrilly demanded what he wanted.

"Is it Mrs. Conors?" he asked, scrutinizing her face earnestly. She turned with a look of open-mouthed wonder upon him, and hesitated before speaking, so he continued:

"Have you forgotten Corney?" He trembled with a vague fear, and the old woman's failing memory smote him painfully.

"Be ye Corney McVeigh? A-comin' home to see yer poor dead mammy, an' ye the ounly boy she had? But surely Corney wouldn't have sich foine clothes. I can scarcely believe ye," she muttered, doubtingly.

"Dead! Mother dead!" he ejaculated, passing his hand across his forehead. He swayed a moment as if struck, and then he answered, with forced calmness:

"Yes, Mrs. Conors, I am Corney, and I want to see my mother. I've been coming home these many years, but something always turned up to spoil my plans. I knew the money I sent her every month was sufficient to keep her in comfort, but I didn't think it would be like this—not like this!"

Corney McVeigh stepped across the ancient threshold and gazed long and searchingly at the face in the darkened parlor; a face seamed and thin with toil and worry, yet infinitely sweet and motherlike to the world-lost man who choked back the tears as he felt again that almost forgotten child-love.

Mrs. Conors broke the silence.

"I put her ould spinning-wheel there in the corner, where she could see it 'fore she went. Those socks on the table was her last work fer ye, Corney. She said to keep yer father's pictur' an' hers togither in the album. I was also tould to

warn ye 'gainst sleepin' in the draught, 'cause ye were always weak about the lungs, an' yer father died o' thet complaint. She thought maybe ye wouldn't be wantin' the ould house, so if the hotel man offered ye a good figure ye could sell it. The cow and the chicks were to go to me, an'—well, bless me heart, if he hasn't fainted!"

Mrs. Conors ceased her explanations and called to the occupants of the rear room, whose conversation came in to her in low monotones. "Mrs. Dodona! Jennie! it's Corney, and the lad's fainted."

The blindness, for that was all that Corney experienced, passed off in a few minutes, and when his eyes could notice he saw that they had carried him to the little room which had once been his own bed-chamber. Two women were placing cool cloths on his head. When he revived, one stepped quietly out. The other remained. She was young and decidedly pretty, but her face showed plainly the effects of recent grief. Cornelius McVeigh noticed her appearance particularly because it was peculiarly familiar to him. The harsh shock of his bereavement had passed, leaving him weakened but calm.

"Corney, do you remember me?" the girl asked him, gently.

"Jennie," he answered, hesitatingly, as if it was an effort for him to collect his thoughts.

"We have lost our mother—ours," she said, tremulously, and lowered her head, weeping.

He hastily arose, and his arm clasped her shoul-

der with brotherly affection. It seemed to him the only way to comfort her. She did not resist him, and they sorrowed together.

Cornelius McVeigh did not hasten away from the scene of his great sorrow. To tell the truth, he had lost for the time being his craving for the bustling of the city and the subdued activity of his office. In the place of the latter came hours of quiet, apathetic reverie while he lingered beneath the roof-tree of home. He modified his dress and waylaid sundry travellers who passed the door in lumbering farm wagons. Ofttimes he clambered aboard and went a-visiting, and in exchange for his city stories received tales of the Monk Road and his mother that were as balm to his wounded heart.

Jennie was also loath to leave the peaceful spot. Her grandparent, who found a new joy in living because of his affection for her, came to the neighboring hotel and hired a suite of rooms for an indefinite period. He proved a worthy comrade in idleness for the jaded business man, and the three of them, Jennie, Cornelius McVeigh and Mr. Hyden, were always together.

Jennie had been an apt pupil, and the few years of education which her grandparent had provided for her had transformed her from an uncultivated country girl into an accomplished young woman. Nor was she lacking in comeliness. Ofttimes the eyes of Cornelius McVeigh followed her with a strange light glistening in their depths.

The boy and girl love of years gone by, so prematurely blighted and so long dormant, was struggling again to the surface, and who knows but another wedding, the last of so many which have been recorded in the previous chapters, may yet be an accomplished fact? But that involves another story, and it has not the presence of Nancy McVeigh.